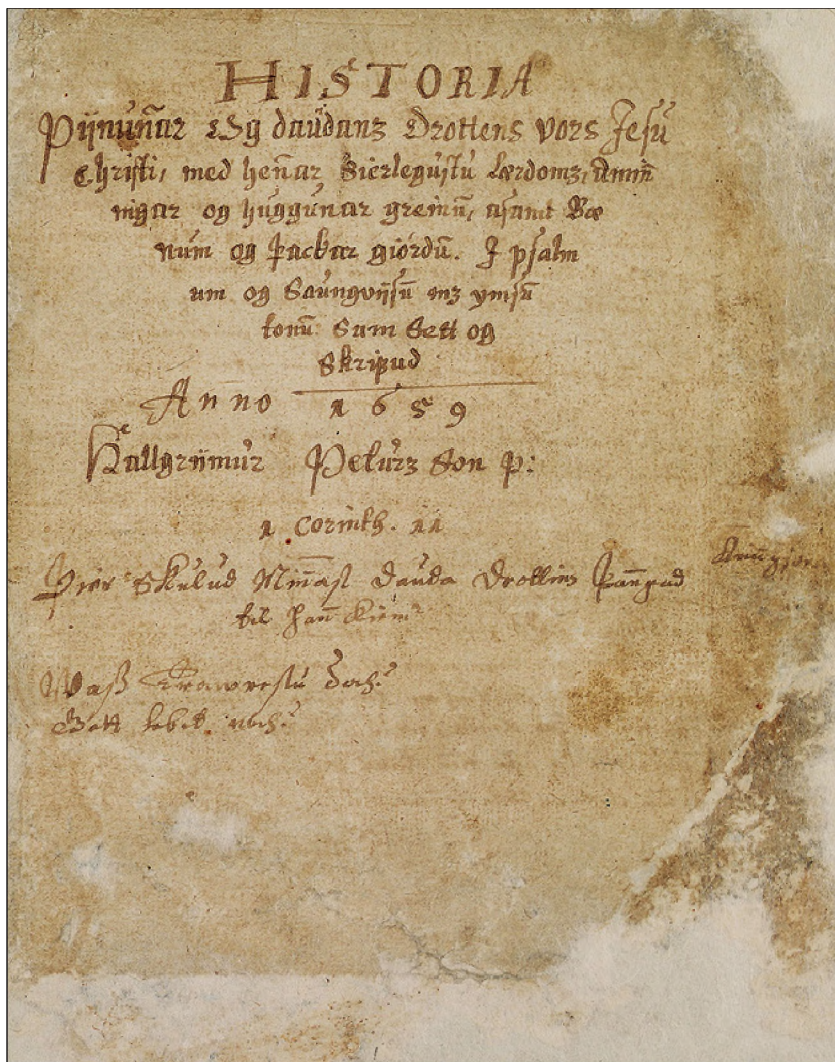


## CHAPTER 15

# The Passion Hymns

This chapter seeks to place Hallgrímur Pétursson's *Passíusálmar* within the European Passion hymn tradition. Verse meditations on the suffering and death of Jesus were a recognized literary genre in Germany and Scandinavia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The characteristics of this genre will be analyzed as will the extent to which those features are reflected or reconfigured in Hallgrímur's *Passíusálmar*.

Sixteenth-century European verse meditations on the Passion followed the scriptural accounts quite closely, whereas by the end of the seventeenth century and into the eighteenth century poets treated the same subject matter with greater self-conscious artistry and freedom. They were no longer content to paraphrase the biblical texts but sought to expand on them, employing a more affective style and drawing on features from neo-Latin verse (Krummacher 1976, 309–457), notably the use of classical figures of speech. Gradually the narrative events of the Passion almost disappear under the weight of meditation and interpretation, the stylistic level is winched up, complexity increases, and the presentation is dramatic and emotive as emphasis shifts from Christ's suffering onto man's responsibility for that suffering (Krummacher 1976, 380ff.). This transformation is true for Passion poems in Germany, Sweden and Denmark/Norway (Lindgärde 1996, 51). More often than not the whole sequence of events is recounted, but some poems focus on individual aspects, such as Christ's seven words from the Cross, or



Title page of *Passíusálmar* in JS 337 4to, a holograph manuscript by Hallgrímur Pétursson. Landsbókasafn Íslands–Háskólabókasafn [National and University Library of Iceland].

the five wounds on Christ's body, or the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Passion hymns were composed for use in church, in households, or for private contemplation. During fasts and Holy Week itself many services were held, all of which had a need for hymns linked to the Passion for both public and private use (see also Einar Sigurbjörnsson 1994, 110). For example, in 1726 the Swedish pastor Daniel Tiseliu published a work containing fifty Passion meditations and as many hymns. In the introduction we learn that this work was especially intended for those living in remote rural locations whose access to weekly services during Lent was limited (Lindgärde 1996, 40).

Most of the Swedish poets who composed Passion hymns were either ordained clerics or studying for the ministry, and they probably regarded composing such poems as part of their calling and education. Some poets were young and eager for ecclesiastical preferment, and Lindgärde suggests that they may have created their hymns as some kind of recommendation for office. Though only a few women composed Passion poems, the role of women in the dissemination of meditative works and prayer books is confirmed not least in the number of such works dedicated to women (Hansson 1991, 283; 1982, chapter 5). Ambitious young authors were able to use this kind of verse to their advantage, while older writers regarded the act of composition as a preparation for death, as can be seen in the prefaces to these works. Ultimately, however, the poet's age was unimportant, because all life was to be seen as a preparation for death.

### For Tears and Not for Applause

In prefaces to sermon collections and other works of instruction and edification, theologians since the days of Saint Augustine had wrestled with the question of whether or to what extent theories of classical rhetoric should be used in the service of Christianity (Krummacher 1986, 108). Debora K. Shuger (1988) has explored the idea of sacred rhetoric in Renaissance Britain and suggests that alongside the kind of preaching that harks back to the Middle Ages, with the *artes praedicandi* and unadorned *sermo humilis* style, there was a Christian high style or *genus grande* that was distinguishable

from Ciceronian high style. Shuger argues that scholars have paid insufficient attention to this mode except as a deviation from classical high style. She identifies two main kinds of Renaissance Christian rhetoric: a traditional conservative style that was affective but essentially low profile, and a more arresting style, heavily emotive, dynamic and dramatic in presentation but also rational and clear. It is in this latter mode that a new definition of high style can be found. First observable in Catholic works, it soon finds a role within Protestant writing. It can be traced back to St Augustine, whose works attracted renewed interest during the Renaissance; yet it also reveals the more general influence of patristic tradition.

In his classic study *Mimesis* (1946), Erich Auerbach discusses the intersection of classical rhetoric and Christian discursive theories, out of which the theory of stylistic categories emerged whereby elevated subject matter required a high style while more everyday topics called for a low style. Christianity touches ordinary people and Jesus himself addressed the laity, the poor, the sick, and children; yet his words were of the most profound importance. His discursive style was “sermo piscatorius” [the language of a fisherman], and yet it was more influential than the most significant work of more rhetorically inflected literary art. Shuger argues that medieval sermon tradition developed not just an emotionally charged simple style but also a high style that, as characterized by Auerbach, was intended to arouse listeners’ feelings. Thus humility (*humilitas*) finds expression not in a high style but rather in a low style that is elevated.

Auerbach also draws attention to the importance of biblical typology, whereby Old Testament phenomena are interpreted as in some way prefiguring New Testament events or individuals. For example, Isaac was seen as a “figure” for the sacrificial death of Christ. To some extent this methodology modified the stylistic notions that had been developed in classical rhetoric. Christian and classical theories adapted and coalesced. Rhetorical rules were modified to serve the primary objective of Christian texts, which was to instruct people in Christian truths and so lead them to God. To that end classical methods and models could be used, but only to the extent that was deemed appropriate and beneficial.

Hallgrímur’s *Passíusálmar* reflect the traditional Christian understanding of scripture whereby Old Testament events prefigure

corresponding events in the New Testament (*typologi*), and these can also be interpreted in terms of events in the life of every Christian (*tropologi*). A familiar example of such an interpretation involves linking the Old Testament story of the Creation, in which God creates Eve from Adam's rib, with Christ's Passion. The creation of Eve is seen as prefiguring the wound in Christ's side, for just as Eve, the mother of all mankind, came from the wound in Adam's side, so the Christian church was formed from Christ's wounded side (Auerbach 1946, 54ff.). The blood and water that run from the wound symbolize healthy spring water or a refreshing drink (see Lindgärde 1996, 292–293). Hallgrímur makes use of this interpretation in his *Passíusálmar* (48, 5–6), discussed in Jakob Jónsson's study of the poet's imagery:

Séra Hallgrímur's use of all these images is based on early Christian tradition. He derives some images directly from works he is known to have used when composing the hymns. Others are probably the fruits of his own imagination, showing that this methodology came naturally to him.<sup>1</sup>

Stina Hansson examined Swedish seventeenth- and eighteenth-century religious works to assess the extent of their indebtedness to contemporary stylistic and aesthetic ideas in secular literature. She concludes that for the most part devotional literature followed the classical-rhetorical norms that characterized (then) contemporary literary tradition:

Devotional literature is distinguished by its strong desire to be “literary” in the institutional sense of the term. However, it is also clear that devotional literature deviates from contemporary literary norms.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Í notkun allra þessara líkinga stendur séra Hallgrímur á grunni fornkirkjulegra erfða. Sumar tekur hann beint úr þeim ritum, sem vitað er, að hann hafi haft til hliðsjónar, er hann samdi sálmana. Aðrar eru sennilega sprottnar beint úr huga hans sjálfs, en sýna þó, að þessi aðferð hefur verið runnin honum sjálfum í merg og bein (Jakob Jónsson 1972, 72).

2. Andaktslitteraturen känne-tecknades alltså av en stark strävan efter att vara “literär” i detta ords institutionella betydelse. Men undersökningen kunde också slå fast, att andaktslitteraturen visar upp en rad avvikelser från de samtida konstlitterära normerna (Hansson 1991, 277).

Thus, in form and style, meditative literature resembles the most highly regarded contemporary secular literature. There are nevertheless elements that distinguish it: first, categorizing meditative works as a specific genre is difficult; second, it is striking how such literature uses *genus familiare* (personal conversation) as a literary form; and third, meditative texts describe inner experience pictorially in a way that has no parallel in other contemporary literature. Perhaps the most important point, however, is how these works manage to link high and low, the human and the divine (Hansson 1991, 278). Stina Hansson agrees with Auerbach's view that Christian promotion of God as mankind's father and mother, and Jesus as humanity's brother and bridegroom, is a total breach of rhetorical decorum (Hansson 1991, 274), yet she suggests that Auerbach fails to distinguish between idea and presentation. In itself the idea of a religious work combining the highest and lowest is no more a breach of stylistic decorum than would be the case in a secular text. She argues that the poet solves the problem by "figural allegory," based on combining two semantic fields, the literal and the transferred (as in four-fold scriptural exegesis). For example, we see it in the relationship between the lovers in the Song of Solomon and between God and man. In a literal sense we observe the human, mundane, and comprehensible, while at the transferred level we see the intersection of high and low, God and sinful humanity (Hansson 1991, 274-275).

In the fourth book of *De doctrina christiana* Augustine sets out his attitude towards rhetoric and Christian oratory in a comprehensive and coherent way. He cites the rule about three levels of style but claims that any topic regarded as unremarkable need not in fact be so within the Christian message.<sup>3</sup> He also emphasizes that human eloquence on its own is insufficient to touch the heart. Augustine thus paved the way for what Shuger calls the "Christian grand style," a high style that was not exclusively bound up with the kings and heroes of neo-classical learning, for it could also accommodate fishermen, blacksmiths, and old women (Shuger 1988, 44). It is a style that should create tears rather than applause (see Augustine

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3. Traditional Ciceronian rhetoric established three stylistic levels: high (to stir/move), middle (to delight/encourage), low (to instruct); and each ought to be appropriate for the subject matter.

1958, 160ff.). The speaker/poet himself must believe, feel, and sense what he is proclaiming. In fact the notion that the speaker must be moved in order to move others can be found in classical rhetoric, and it achieved additional traction in the Middle Ages. Emotive style was traditionally regarded as high style, yet during the Renaissance, preaching was often emotive but straightforward, and thus represented a breach of the tripartite stylistic template (though this was already in evidence during the Middle Ages). A different and more flexible Renaissance position sought to associate ideas about affective preaching with classical notions of high style and to revive old rules about decorum. In this way an attempt was made to combine Graeco-Roman and medieval elements in order to develop a Christian high style in which art and grace, eloquence and inspiration could all exert influence.

Ideas about the role of literary artistry in religious verse are closely linked to ideas about the preparation and preaching of sermons. Medieval Scandinavian preachers aimed to instruct uneducated people in the fundamental tenets of Christian doctrine. Accordingly they thought it best to speak in a simple and unadorned style. In Iceland such a perspective can be found in the writings of Bishop Jón Vídalín (1666–1720), for example. However, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Lutherans believed that instruction was not the only priority of the preacher; he should also try to move his congregation and stir them into agreement. It was therefore very important for him to be both rational and articulate.

Rhetoric, both general and associated with religious writing, flourished from the late sixteenth century onward (Lindgärde 1996, 122; Shuger 1988, 193). At the same time in Germany the composition of meditations on Christ's Passion and death became popular. Scholars such as Lindgärde and Hansson have shown that German meditative writings were an important influence on similar works later produced in Sweden and elsewhere in Scandinavia. The links involved (among other factors) the emergence of rhetoric as a model for authors.

### Passion Poetry and Rhetoric

As we have seen, rhetoric dominated virtually all official discourse in the seventeenth century, both spoken and written, prose and

verse, and not least the composition of Passion poetry. Lindgärde stressed that the links between spiritual and rhetorical poetry were reciprocal. Rhetoric created the Passion hymn as a literary genre, while the authors of Passions hymns and other religious works adopted the forms and methodologies of rhetoric. Thus rhetoric influenced and was influenced by subject matter. Religious literature had priorities and aims that were linked to but also challenged rhetorical theory (Lindgärde 1996, 73).

The scholarly reflections on religious verse that emerged during the post-Reformation renaissance were mostly concerned with style (*elocutio*). But *inventio* was also an important element, not least the theory about *topoi* (*loci* in Latin), for it was to rhetorical works that an orator or poet could look for subject matter and argumentation (see *Orðsins list á lærdómsöld*, p. 72; also Sverrir Tómasson 1988, 69ff.). Emphasizing the importance of this point, Joachim Dyck argues that all seventeenth-century poetry, in both subject matter and style, was based on the idea of *topoi* (Dyck 1972, 133). Lindgärde came to the same conclusion about Passion poems; all such pieces drew on the same scholarly traditions, largely due to the *inventio* system (1996, 75). *Loci communes* were points, quotations, and narratives that could be used in various contexts, and they were collected in published volumes, just as other learning had been made accessible in medieval encyclopedias. Poets and speakers could consult these volumes and find materials suitable for every occasion. *Topoi* or *loci* can be divided into two types: those within the source text being used and others imported from elsewhere to illuminate a chosen theme. An example of the former is *locus ex notatione*, the interpretation of the name of a particular individual associated with the main theme. As for the latter type, there were metaphors and similes, historical parallels and parables. Examples would include the *locus ex similibus*, whereby one phenomenon is compared with another, as when a mother's love for her child is viewed as comparable with Jesus' love for mankind (Lindgärde 1996, 76); and the *locus ex contrariis*, as when men's indifference to Jesus' death is contrasted with the compassion to be found within the natural world.

Some *topoi* were sought in the Bible and patristic writings. In 1521 Melanchthon published his *Loci communes rerum theologicarum seu hypotyposes theologicae*, a work intended to help students



prepare their sermons. In it he presents various fundamental theological points and shows how they can be interpreted in the light of scripture. Such works, for example, contain examples of how to treat treachery and insincerity, with references to the Proverbs 5:3 and Psalms 55:21, where deceitful words and the lips of a deceitful woman are both said to be “smoother than oil.” These same expressions often appear in texts where this particular topic is being treated, not least in poems based on the Passion. Melanchthon was the originator of the “*loci theologici*,” but Christian poets did not need to restrict themselves to *topoi* from scriptural or patristic works, and could use material from classical mythology and medieval texts. Such “pagan” elements are comparatively rare in Passion hymns, but can be found in Johan Widman’s poems about Christ’s Passion and death (these pieces are in fact based on the Passion hymns of the German poet Paul Fleming; see Lindgärde 1996, 22 and 89–91). Many regarded the use of material from non-Christian culture as problematic, but others found arguments to justify the practice.

When a poet undertook to compose a Passion poem, the rhetorical category of *inventio* required him to decide on an argumentative strategy for the topic; for example, the Passion story could be treated as a song of praise or a lament. The poem’s structure, its *dispositio*, involved four key elements: the *exordium* (introduction) sought to arouse the reader’s interest and curiosity, the *propositio* describes the subject matter, the *narratio* was the narrative substance itself, and, finally, there was the *peroratio* (conclusion). Other possible elements included *confirmatio* and *confutatio*. In meditative works the *narratio* always involved retelling a *lectio* (biblical story).

In his introduction the poet identifies the subject of the poem and requests God’s help in doing justice to that subject. These same elements also represent literary tradition at work in Passion poems. The *invocatio* belongs here, with its appeal for divine help and inspiration, a motif that can be traced back to Homer and Virgil. In Passion poems the invocation is usually directed to either God the Father or Christ or the Holy Spirit, whereas in classical works it had been directed to pagan figures such as the Muses (Lindgärde 1996, 98). It is often at this point that the poet deploys a humility formula, stressing his sense of inadequacy in the face of daunting subject matter. In such *topoi* listeners/readers are often addressed directly.

At the end of the work we find the *peroratio*, originally used by lawyers to influence jurors. In poetry the *peroratio* usually marked the poem's conclusion, sometimes by referring to the poet's frailties. References to tiredness in Passion hymns are a common motif, as time spent meditating on Christ's Passion increases the poet's awareness of his own human weakness, not least his inability to do justice to his sacred subject. The endings of such poems are often associated with night and/or death and there is sometimes a final prayer requesting that Jesus be laid to rest in the heart of the narrator.

Having seen how *dispositio* and *inventio* helped to shape Passion poems, we turn next to *elocutio*, the third rhetorical element, which offers guidance on style as writers strive for decorum or that which is *aptum* (appropriate). This involves a combination of seemingly language (*puritas*), clear thought (*perspicuitas*) and stylistic elegance (*ornatus*). In religious poetry special emphasis was always placed on the inherent tension between clarity and elegance of presentation. The aim of every speech was, in rhetorical terms, to convince the audience/reader, and this involved instructing, pleasing, and moving (*docere, delectare et movere*). From a Christian perspective the subject matter of Passion poems, mankind's earthly and eternal welfare, and the divine revelation, was of unrivalled importance and thus demanded appropriate elevation of style. Yet the style of the Bible, the great textual model, was regarded as unadorned and straightforward. Moreover, the aim of poetry was to make sublime subject matter accessible to all, and this required plain and pellucid presentation. In earlier Christian literature, both prose and verse, there had always been a tension between rhetorical notions of sublimity of subject and style and the Christian belief in the union of the divine and sublime with the human and humble.

### Passion Hymns in Germany and Denmark

It has been suggested (Grímur Thomsen 1887, viii–ix) that Hallgrímur Pétursson's role in Icelandic ecclesiastical history resembled that of Paul Gerhardt (1607–1676) in Germany, but closer examination reveals that Hallgrímur had as much in common with Gerhardt's fellow-countryman, the poet Andreas Gryphius (1616–1664). This is not to say that Hallgrímur and Gerhardt had nothing in common, but such comparisons tend also to confirm the many general

similarities between poetry in Iceland and mainland Europe at this time. In Germany Gryphius was often seen as an exceptional figure, an unusually gifted author the excellence of whose poems served to highlight the less accomplished works of his contemporaries. Krummacker calls it “die [...] Tendenz, den Dichter von seiner Zeit zu sondern” [the [...] tendency to separate the poet from his time] (Krummacker 1976, 26), and other baroque poets are often thought of in these terms. Krummacker’s *Der junge Gryphius und die Tradition* (1976), an important study of Gryphius’s poetry and a detailed examination of baroque religious poetry in general, mentions Hallgrímur Pétursson briefly. Krummacker states that Gryphius’s Passion poems, with their straightforward narration and relative lack of interpretative additions, earn him a distinctive place within the genre (*Passionsdichtung*); he was a figure without any immediate poetic predecessors or successors (Krummacker 1976, 390). Krummacker adds:

As a parallel to the Passion songs of Gryphius, close in time but geographically and linguistically distant, Wilhelm Frieße’s *Nordische Barockdichtung. Eine Darstellung und Deutung skandinavischer Dichtung zwischen Reformation und Aufklärung* (Munich, 1968), pp. 260–264 (also p. 308) mentions the *Passíusálmar* (1659) of the Icelandic Hallgrímur Pétursson, in which, according to Frieße, the text, narrative and observations are linked, and which draws on the works of M. Moller and J. Gerhard. However, given the framework within which Frieße was working, his necessarily brief remarks are insufficient to allow us to judge the closeness of the analogy with Gryphius and the extent to which the same conditions and intentions were present.<sup>4</sup>

Gryphius’s poems about Christ’s Passion and death appear in the fourth part (*Tränen über das Leiden Jesu Christi* [Tears over the

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4. Eine zeitlich nahe, doch geographisch und sprachlich ferner liegende Parallelscheinung zu den Passionsliedern des Gryphius könnte die von WILHELM FRIEßE, *Nordische Barockdichtung. Eine Darstellung und Deutung skandinavischer Dichtung zwischen Reformation und Aufklärung*, München 1968, S. 260 bis 264 (dazu auch S. 308) erwähnte, 1659 erschienene Passionsdichtung des Isländers Hallgrímur Pétursson sein, worin nach dem Hinweis von Frieße Textnacherzählung mit Betrachtungen verbunden wird, die u.a. aus Werken von M. Moller und J. Gerhard schöpfen. Doch reichen die im gegebenen Rahmen zwangsläufig knappen Angaben von Frieße nicht für ein Urteil darüber aus, wieweit die Entsprechungen zu Gryphius gehen und wieweit dabei gleiche Voraussetzungen und Absichten wirksam sind (Krummacker 1976, 390–391, fn).

suffering of Jesus Christ)) of his *Oden und Epigramme*, published in 1652 but probably composed 1635–38. His literary model may have been *Evangelische Gesängen* by Johann Heermann (1585–1647). We know that Gryphius also made use of Johann Bugenhagen's Passion harmony, compiled from all four gospels, as did Hallgrímur Pétursson in his *Passíusálmar*, as the Danish scholar Arne Møller pointed out (1922, 90–93). According to Krummacher Bugenhagen's text appeared in Latin (1524) and German (1526).<sup>5</sup>

Hallgrímur Pétursson's *Passíusálmar* is one of many such works composed in Icelandic, and Møller compared the *Passíusálmar* with the most important of the others (1922, 174–184). Lutheran Passion hymn collections often had four, five, or six sections (*acta*), each devoted to particular parts of the Passion story, or they had twenty-four sections corresponding to the hours from Maundy Thursday to Good Friday (see also Einar Sigurbjörnsson 1994, 111–112). It is no coincidence that Gryphius's *Tränen* has nineteen poems. Starting six weeks before Easter these pieces were supposed to be read as follows: seven on Sundays, six on Wednesdays, and six on Fridays. Other authors have thirteen or eighteen poems, depending on when the Lenten fast was thought to begin. Catharina Regina von Greiffenberg divides her poems into twelve sections in *Des [. . .] Leidens und Sterbens Jesu Christi Zwölf andächtige Betrachtungen* [Twelve meditations on the suffering and death of Jesus Christ] (1672). Johann Gerhard's *Meditationes sacrae* (1606) has fifty poems, and Ernst Koch suggests that the numerical allusion is to the fifty roses in the rosary, and that like the prayers each meditation was to be an exercise in piety; there is also a reference to Psalm 50, which discusses penitence in a distinctive way (Koch 1987, 35). It is possible that Hallgrímur had Gerhard in mind when deciding to have fifty hymns. Other Icelandic Passion hymns (discussed below) were normally divided into seven sections.

In his study of Gryphius Krummacher shows how firmly rooted the poet is within the medieval traditions of Christian exegesis.<sup>6</sup>

5. Møller gives the dates as 1523 for the Latin version and 1525 for the German.

6. "Gryphius hat in seinen Passionsliedern die Passion Christi ganz im Sinne der lutherischen Passionspredigt auf der Grundlage von Bugenhagens Passionsharmonie und in einer mit Predigtzyklen übereinstimmenden Gliederung nacherzählt und in engstem Zusammenhang mit der exegetischen Tradition im Blick auf Ursache und Frucht

For example, a comparison is drawn between the Garden of Gethsemane and the Garden of Eden; this is without biblical support, but is a traditional interpretation of the church, and can be found in Bugenhagen's Passion harmony (see Einar Sigurbjörnsson 1994, 109). It is an idea drawn on by most baroque authors such as Gryphius, Arndt, Gerhard, Herberger, and Moller, not to mention early patristic writers such as Augustine and Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444). Hallgrímur also makes use of it; in verse 2 of the second Passion hymn that treats Christ's agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, there is a reference to the Garden of Eden: "Í aldingarði fyrst Adam braut / aftur Jesús það bæta hlaut [. . .]" [In the garden first Adam sinned / then Jesus had to atone for it [. . .]]. Arne Møller comments:

It is very characteristic of the relationship between Hallgrímur and his German model, that here he happily avoids falling into the temptation of retelling Martin Moller's awful "Dearest History" from the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus "has fun in the garden picking lilies." He only borrows the comparison between the Fall in the Garden of Eden and the Restoration of the Garden of Gethsemane [. . .].<sup>7</sup>

Like Johann Arndt and Martin Moller, Gryphius draws on occult literature, and there has been some debate as to which articles of faith he actually believed in. Krummacker, however, has no doubt that Gryphius was a committed Lutheran, citing as evidence the poet's sceptical view of mysticism. Gryphius identifies those elements that seem appropriate, presents them in his own way, and rejects the rest (Krummacker 1976, 498). Krummacker argues that elements of mysticism associated with Christ's wounds are little in evidence in *Tränen über das Leiden Jesu Christi* [Tears over the suffering of

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ausgelegt" [In his Passion poems Gryphius has renarrated the whole Passion story in the spirit of the Lutheran Passion sermon, based on Bugenhagen's Passion harmony, in line with sermon cycle structure, and in close conformity with exegetical tradition concerning cause and effect] (Krummacker 1976, 390).

7. Det er meget karakteristisk for Forholdet mellem Hallgrímur og hans tyske Forbilde, at han her lykkeligt ganske er undgaaet at falde i den Fristelse at genfortælle Martin Mollers rædsomme "Kærestehistorie" fra Getsemane Have, hvor Jesus skal "more sig i Urtegaarden og plukke Lilier." Han har kun taget Sammenligningen mellem Faldet i Paradisets Have og Genoprettelsen i Getsemane Have [. . .] (Møller 1922, 117).

Jesus Christ], but much more apparent in Arndt's *Paradiesgärtlein* and in other Passion meditations that Gryphius used as models. Møller reached a similar conclusion after comparing *Passíusálmar* with Martin Moller's *Soliloquia de passione Jesu Christi* [*Eintal sálarinnar* in Icelandic; The soul's monologue]:

And in my earlier discussion of Hallgrímur's *Passíusálmar* there has already been occasion to discuss many examples of how freely and independently Hallgrímur responds to his German model and how what looks like dependence and reproduction proves rather to be reincarnation and retelling.<sup>8</sup>

Krummacher believes that his research into Gryphius's works has shown the importance of carefully examining the sources for individual seventeenth-century poems in order to explain features that seem strange to the modern reader and thus to help interpret the overall text more satisfactorily (Krummacher 1976, 459).

Recent research has shown that rhetoric played an important role in Luther's works even though earlier scholars had emphasized his disapproval of it (Krummacher 1986, 105). In the heat of Reformation controversy, Luther may have turned against various elements of medieval ecclesiastical tradition, yet a number of them reappeared in the post-Reformation church, partly in the guise of mysticism, which was very influential during the seventeenth century. We know that after the Reformation there was reciprocal influence of several kinds among the various denominations of the church. It has been pointed out that in *Passíusálmar* there are important points of Lutheran theology and mysticism that can also be found in meditative literature published in Iceland during the seventeenth century, and that Hallgrímur drew on these while composing his hymns (Einar Sigurbjörnsson 1994, 120). Hallgrímur and Gryphius clearly compose within the same tradition of religious verse and both use the same sources in an individual and discriminating way.

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8. Og her har der under de foregaaende Undersøgelser allerede for flere Enkeltheder i Pass. været Anledning til at gøre opmærksom paa, hvor frit og selvstændigt Hallgrímur gennemgaaende staar over for det tyske Forbillede, og hvorledes der der, hvor der kan vises Afhængighed, langt mere kan tales om Genfødelse og Gendigtning end om Gengivelser (Møller 1922, 191).

Introducing his Passion poems, Gryphius says that he intends to set his hymns to well-known tunes and to use straightforward vocabulary;<sup>9</sup> those looking for poetic originality or color are encouraged to read some of his other religious works (which he names). Martin Opitz (*Geistliche Poemata*) and Johann Heermann (*Devoti Musica Cordis*) make the same point when introducing their own religious works.<sup>10</sup> They were clearly determined to use a plain style and avoid portentousness ("Rednerpracht") in some of their religious works. Certainly in his *Passiúsálmar* Hallgrímur Pétursson uses straightforward vocabulary and comprehensible similes, and composes with familiar melodies in mind.

Krummacher has shown that in Hallgrímur's *Passiúsálmar* the influence of Johann Arndt (*Paradiesgärtlein*), Johann Heermann (*Exercitium Pietatis*, *KirchSeufftzer*, *SchließGlöcklein*) and Martin Moller is detectable, along with patristic exegetical tradition (Krummacher 1976, 264). Heermann was a kind of intermediary between Gryphius and Opitz, and from his works Gryphius was able to learn

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9. From Gryphius's introduction to *Tränen*: "Shortly before his death an outstanding man wanted all his papers and poems burned to ashes except for those concerned with divine matters. Contemplation of the secrets of the highest refreshes us in our difficulties and guides us when we are completely abandoned: that which a man writes to honor this world passes away with the world and often both his fingers and conscience are soiled by it" [Ein vortreflicher Mann wolte kurtz vor seinem Ende / daß alle seine Papiere vnd Getichte Aschen wären / ausser denjenigen / die von göttlichen Sachen handelten. Denn die Betrachtung der Geheimnüss deß höchsten erquicket vns in Schwermuth / vnd begleitet / wenn wir von allem verlassen werden: Was man der Welt zu Ehren schreibet / das vergehet mit der Welt / vnd beschwärtzet oft die Finger vnd Gewissen derer / die damit bemühet] (Gryphius 1964, 2:101). He adds: "The verbal artistry is in itself of the simplest kind, and as far as possible follows the words of the sacred story. Because I have here sought to achieve nothing but devotion, I have seen fit to make use of familiar melodies and everyday speech. For those who enjoy poignant poetic inventions or colors in sacred works of this kind I direct you to my *Oliveto*, *Golgotha* and tragedies [. . .] Here I bring to the grave of my Redeemer not precious aloes and myrrh but just a simple cloth, but have great respect for the plumage of those writers who wish to fly higher" [Was die Art zu schreiben belanget / ist selbige auff das schlechteste / vnd so viel möglich / an die Worte der heiligsten Geschichte gebunden / Denn weil ich hier nichts als die Andacht gesucht / habe ich mich bekanter Melodien vnd der gemeinsten Weise zu reden gebrauchen wollen. Wehm poetische Erfindungen oder Farben in derogleichen heiligen Wercke belieben / den weise ich zu meinem *Oliveto*, *Golgotha* vnd Trauer=Spiele[n] / [. . .] Hier bringe ich zu dem Grabe meines Erlösers nicht teure Aloen vnd Myrrhen / sondern nur schlechte Leinwand vnd Ehre derjenigen Feder / die bey dem grossen Söhn=Altar deß Sohnes Gottes höher fliegen wollen] (Gryphius 1964, 2:98).

10. For example, Opitz claims that his gospel hymns are composed in the traditional style of the Psalms (Opitz 1970, 18: "Auff die gemeine Weisen der Psalmen gefasset").

how religious verse based on long-standing tradition could make use of new literary influences (Krummacher 1976, 266). Most important of all, however, was Gryphius's innovation in avoiding pedagogy and being more concerned with the circumstances of the faithful so that each individual could engage with the text in a personal way (Krummacher 1976, 257). One example of just how fertile the Passion hymn genre was at this time is *Geistliche Wisch-Tücher* [Spiritual handkerchiefs] by Gryphius's friend Johann Casparn von Gersdorff, which was composed in response to Gryphius's *Tränen*.<sup>11</sup>

Despite the shared background of the Passion poetry by Gryphius and Hallgrímur, and despite the poets' similar attitudes to the composition of religious verse, their Passion works have little in common. In Gryphius's poems the interpretative element never looms large and tends to be woven into a simple narrative, whereas in Hallgrímur's *Passíusálmar* much of each poem is taken up with interpretation.

The best-known Passion hymns in Danish are by Thomas Kingo (1634–1703) and Elias Eskildsen Naur (1650–1728). Kingo's hymns can be found in the "Vinterparten" [Winter section] of *Danmarks og Norges kirkers forordnede psalmebog* [The Ordained Hymnbook of the Danish and Norwegian Churches] (1689) and are based on the main biblical sources for the Passion. There are fourteen hymns and as with Hallgrímur all are composed to familiar melodies.<sup>12</sup> In his hymns Kingo emphasizes that the events of the Passion are realistic and immediate, so that the reader/listener can suffer with Jesus while also accepting responsibility for the deeds of his tormentors. Kingo uses all his baroque-inspired artistry in depicting Jesus' suffering and death (*Dansk litteraturhistorie* 3 1983, 341–342). With his affective style and rhetorical figures the poet aims to touch the reader deeply, as with the frequent use of imperative verbs: "Merk hvor de hans Kræffter sprenger [. . .] See hvor er hans Seener rakt!" [See how his

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11. Gersdorff, Hans-Caspar von, *Geistliche Wisch-Tücher / Oder XIX. Gegen-An-dachten zu Andreae Gryphii Thränen über das Leiden JEsu CHristi* [. . .] Gedruckt in Lissa bey Wigand Funcken Im Jahre 1656.

12. Sørensen and Storstein identify fourteen Passion hymns by Kingo; Erik A. Nielsen states that there are seventeen, for use during fasts; and Marita Akhøj Nielsen identifies eighteen pieces by including the Easter Day resurrection hymn (Sørensen and Storstein 1999, 116; Erik A. Nielsen 1987; Marita Akhøj Nielsen 1995).



strength is tested [. . .] see how his sinews are stretched] (Kingo 4:975, 468). At the same time the poet expresses his own sorrow at Christ's fate, not least in the Good Friday hymn. Thus it seems natural to think of the hymns overall as lamentations, yet in fact the first of them emphasizes song; not only does Christ sing about his own torment but believers ought to sing as well, for it is by song and faith that they will reach heaven. At the same time the importance of crying is noted:

Siung min Siæl, og lad dig høre!  
 Glem dog ey andægtig Graad!  
 JEsu Aand dend dig skal røre,  
 Siung om Eblet Adam aad!  
 Siung saa om det Jesus leed,  
 Om hans Kors, hans blood og sved,  
 Siung og troe, saa skal du stige  
 Siungendes i Himmerige.  
 (Kingo 4:975, 278–279)

[Sing my soul and let yourself be heard!  
 Forget not devout tears, however!  
 Jesus' spirit must then stir you,  
 sing about the apple Adam ate!  
 Sing too about what Jesus suffered,  
 about his Cross, his blood and sweat,  
 sing and believe; so shall you rise,  
 singing, into Heaven.]

*Vinterparten* also includes several Passion hymns by Elias E. Naur (1650–1728) and 1689 also saw the publication of *Golgotha paa Parnasso* [Golgotha in Parnassus], a lengthy work that represents Denmark's most remarkable contribution to the Passion poetry genre. Indeed, it is the most extensive poem of its kind ever composed in Scandinavia. Naur's treatment of the Passion has five "acts," each with several scenes. This epic poem has 5,628 Alexandrine lines in quatrain form. Its treatment of the narrative material is conventional: first, the biblical narrative is rehearsed and the historical circumstances recounted; second, an allegorical interpretation of the events follows; and finally, there is an exhortation to

the reader, followed by prayer (Naur 1973, 2:191). For both the first and second printings Naur prepared a commentary (Naur 1973, 2:7) that reveals his wide reading and openness to ideological influence, not least Passion traditions in music and literature. Naur cites a work by the German poet Martin Bohemius/Behm (1557–1622), his *Spectaculum Passionis Jesu Christi oder Das blutige Schauspiel des bitteren Leydens und Sterbens unsers lieben Herrn Jesu Christi* [*Spectaculum Passionis Jesu Christi*, or The bloody spectacle of the bitter suffering and death of our dear Lord Jesus Christ] (1614). As its title indicates, the work was a *spectaculum* [performance], divided into “acts” like Naur’s Passion poem. Scholars have shown that each of Naur’s scenes consists of narrative material together with a meditation long enough to be performed, and that the work overall was intended for “kunstfuld oplæsning” [artistic recitation] (Naur 1973, 2:188–189; see also Einar Sigurbjörnsson 1994, 108).<sup>13</sup>

Naur’s handling of his subject is based on long-established tradition, and the work’s structure is also conventional, but its style is striking, particularly the importance placed on achieving an emotional response in the reader. Naur learned this technique from the Nuremberg baroque authors, notably Johann Klaj (1616–1656). He employs a rhyme scheme that Klaj is said to have invented and emphasizes the potential impact of sonic effects in poetry (Brask II 1973, 192). This can be seen in a verse in which Peter laments his denial of Christ:

Jeg Tuder, Luder need, Jeg hyler, Kurrer, Piber;  
 Jeg Lumper, humper frem, saa hart mig synden kniber;  
 Jeg stymper krymper mig; Jeg veed ey hvor Jeg er,  
 I denne Nød og stød! Jeg dog Guds Ansigt seer.  
 (Naur 1973, 1:60, verse 244)

[I bawl, fall, I howl, croak, cry;  
 I stumble, bumble forward, so hard does sin me try;  
 I wriggle and jiggle! I know not where I am,  
 In this stress and duress. Yet see God’s face I can.]

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13. A performance of the whole work would take six to seven hours; people have generally been content to perform individual sections (Naur 1973, 2:189).

As we have noted, Naur's artistic and scholarly inspiration had several sources. Like Jón Vídalín in Iceland he was much influenced by English preaching style (see Þorleifur Hauksson and Þórir Óskarsson 1994, 408ff.). The example of Dutch and German baroque poets also left its mark, but most important was the mannerist poetry associated with the Italian poet Giambattista Marino (1569–1625). This style has been described as a combination of all the modern communicative tricks of art poetry and colloquial Danish speech.<sup>14</sup> Despite its radical elements the work is firmly rooted in the tradition of Christian meditative writing, with its patristic quotations, especially from Augustine, and Naur makes conventional use of typological allegory.

The Passion poems of Kingo and Naur are dissimilar and yet closely linked in the sense that Naur refers to Kingo in his introduction, noting that next to God no one had offered him more help and inspiration. A few instances will help to show how these two poets respond to their subject matter and how their methods compare with those of Hallgrímur Pétursson. In his Good Friday hymn Kingo discusses the sign that Pilate arranged to have hung on the Cross: "Skriv dig Jesu paa mit hierte, / O min Konge og min Gud! / At ey Vellyst eller smerte / Dig formaar at slette ud" [Jesus, inscribe yourself on my heart, / O my God and King, / so that no joy or hurt / can remove you] (Kingo 4:1975, 470). In Hallgrímur's thirty-fifth Passion hymn, "Um yfirskriftina yfir krossinum" [On the superscription over the Cross], we learn that the sign was written in three languages, prompting Hallgrímur to compose the verse "Gefðu að móðurmálið mitt" [Grant that my mother tongue] (35,9), in which he expresses the hope that the uncorrupted Christian message will be preached for as long as the settlement of Iceland lasts. He also focuses on two signs—one hanging over his own head signaling his true deserts, and the other that hung over the crucified Jesus: "Handskrift var ein yfir höfði mér, / hver mína sálu grætti. / Önnur stóð, Jesú, yfir þér / sem angrið míns hjarta bætti" [There was an inscription over my head, / which caused my soul to cry. / Another stood over you, Jesus, / that healed my heart's distress] (35,10). Naur goes on to make much of these elements; he first meditates in general on words and their truthfulness

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14. Naur 1973, 2:203.

and then treats each word of the sign on the Cross. He also notes that the words were written in three languages to enable the message to be carried throughout the world. However, he concludes that this is not enough, for he longs to imprint these words permanently in his own heart and soul (Naur 1973, 1:22).

All three poets write about Pilate's wife, who warns her husband not to condemn Jesus to death because of her overnight dream. Kingo then turns his attention to the Jews, comparing them with Pilate's wife: "O I Jøder steene-blinde / O I store Drømmere / Hører her en Heden-Qvinde, / Som flux bedr end I kand see!" [O, stoneblind Jews / O you great dreamers, / hear this heathen-woman, / who at once better than you can see!] (Kingo 4:1975, 401). Hallgrímur names "húsrú Pílati" [Pilate's wife] in his twenty-second hymn and laments that Pilate did not take her advice. He then refers to other women, historical and contemporary: "Góðar kvinnur þess gæti mest, / gjarnan ástundi dæmin best" [May good women take great care, / keenly set the best example] (22,12). Two biblical women, Abigail and Jezebel, are mentioned: one is "illa ræmd" [infamous], the other wins "æru og sæmd" [praise and honor]. Hallgrímur seems to assume that readers will know the stories of these two figures and sees no reason to explore them further. Naur has more to say about Pilate's wife than either Hallgrímur or Kingo (Naur 1973, 1:94–98). He urges women to follow her example: "Lær her i Qvinde-Kiøn dyd aff end Heedning-Qvinde! / Lær her med gode Raad at være ret Mandinde!" [Learn here, womankind, virtue from a heathen woman! / Learn here through right counsel to be a righteous soul] (Naur 1973, 1:95). This prompts Naur to warn women against regarding their appearance, clothing and makeup as important ("Det er ey nock mand sig stafferer, smincker, pryder" [It is not enough to dress, preen and decorate oneself] (*ibid.*)), and a remarkably vivid image of transience follows, in which the poet notes that fine clothing provides good food for worms, that fine fabrics such as silk are originally spun from worms, and, eventually, that all such clothing will rot and turn to dust. As Hallgrímur notes, Naur mentions that Jezebel was another biblical woman who eventually reaps a sorry harvest for the poor advice she gave. Finally, Naur reminds men that not listening to women's wise advice can be dangerous, and that women are not at all their intellectual inferiors:

Gud har ey Vissdom saa til Manden vildet binde,  
 Han jo en Draabe lod til qvinde-hiernen rinde,  
 Ja tit en gandske Flood og Vissdoms Kilde-Strøm.  
 Hvo med Pilato det vil holde for en Drøm?  
 (Naur 1973, 1:96)

[God would not wisdom to man alone confine,  
 he also let a drop run into women's minds,  
 Yes, and often of wisdom a flood and source-stream.  
 Who with Pilate would treat this as a dream?]

All these Passion hymns draw on meditative and rhetorical tradition, but as these examples confirm, poets' interpretations could differ significantly.

### The Passion in Other Forms

The Norwegian poet Petter Dass did not really compose Passion hymns in the meditative sense discussed above, but he wrote about the suffering and death of Jesus in the fourth song of his *Katekismesálmar* [Catechism hymns] when examining the second article of the Lutheran creed (Dass 1980, 2:253–258). Dass's hymn reflects Lutheran sermon structure, according to which a Passion discourse should first retell the narrative events and then explain why Jesus needed to suffer, what the consequences of his doing so were for readers/listeners, and how they could make use of the poem for guidance and reflection (Akslen 1997, 139ff.). On the other hand, in the Norwegian poet Dorothe Engelbretsdatter's meditative hymn the narrator addresses Christ and his own soul. The title is "Jesu Christi hellige Pinis og Døds Salige Brug og tilegnelse" [Jesus Christ's Holy Passion and Blessed Death: for use and devotion], and its thirty-four stanzas are intended for private worship rather than for singing in church, as may be inferred from the poem's style, meter and melody (Engelbretsdatter 1955 I, 75; Akslen 1997, 133). Dass addresses various groups among his listeners/readers. For him Christ's victory and resurrection were the key elements in the Passion narrative, whereas Dorothe Engelbretsdatter highlights his suffering. Comparing the two poems leads Laila Akslen

to conclude that while Dass is influenced by Lutheran ideology and traditional hymns, Dorothe writes in the spirit of new Christian meditation. As noted already, this sensibility dominated religious and meditative works of the time, though in their verbalization practices both poets draw on Christian rhetorical tradition (Akslen 1997, 144–145).

In Hallgrímur Pétursson's poetry we can see how Dass's approach developed into the meditative style favored by Dorothe Engelbretsdatter. Hallgrímur composed two hymns about the suffering and death of Jesus that differ from his *Passíusálmar* and were probably composed earlier. They are "Mér er af hjarta minnistætt" [I remember in my heart], twelve verses long (Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:41–44; see the discussion in chapter 13, p. 280), and the ten verses of "Hvað hjartans kæran hafði mig" [O, how he held me dear to his heart] (Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:274–277). The first hymn follows the Passion text closely and draws attention to Christ's physical suffering, whereas in the second piece Hallgrímur achieves a more meditative perspective, with more emphasis on the significance for mankind of Jesus' death rather than on reviewing the actual events. The vocabulary and presentation are more emotionally charged, and rhetorical figures more prominently deployed. The opening stanza is an *exordium* that begins with a rhetorical question functioning as a kind of exclamation: "Hvað hjartans kæran hafði mig / herra minn Jesú góði?" [O, how he held me dear to his heart, / my good Lord Jesus!] and the reply is that "í dauðann gaf hann sjálfan sig / og sínu úthellti blóði" [to death he gave himself / and shed his blood]. The subject is introduced in the first stanza (*propositio*), and the next three verses are *narratio*, in which Jesus' youth is depicted: "fyrirlitinn af heimi / lagður í jötu asna er" [despised of the world, / laid in an ass's manger], then the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, and finally the torture, dramatically expressed through word clusters: "*falskoss, fjötur og bönd / færður í Júða hönd / högg, slög og hráka leið / hæðni, álygð og neyð / og dómsályktan ranga*" [false kiss, fetters and bonds; / abandoned into Jews' hands; / knocks, blows and spit endured; / mockery, slander and distress; / and wrong judgment] and then finally crucifixion. Verses 5–7 all begin with a question addressed to Jesus and answered by the poet:

Hvað kom þar til, minn mildi guð,  
 mæðu þá vildir líða  
 og á þig taka allskyns nauð  
 með angri og sárum kvíða?  
 Góðsemdar gæskan þín  
 gerði það vegna mín  
 [. . .]  
 (Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:275)

[How could it be, my merciful God,  
 that you would suffer misery  
 and endure all sorts of distress  
 with sorrow and sore anxiety?  
 Your generous goodness  
 did this for me  
 [. . .]]

The responses to each of these events are highlighted. In the two penultimate verses the correct response to Christ's sacrifice is for man to "offra" [offer] him his heart and mind, and thus the narrator wishes to grant Jesus his "hjartað, sinni, hugsan og tal" [heart, mind, thought and speech], noting that Jesus' death gives his own future demise a new meaning. The final verse consists of praise pointing to the eternal homage that will be sung in Paradise. These two hymns may well have been the poet's way of preparing himself for his great work, the *Passíusálmar*.

### Icelandic Passion Literature

European prose works about the suffering and death of Christ were translated into Icelandic shortly after the Reformation. The following list offers some sense of the range and diversity of these influential publications. The first Icelandic book printed in Iceland is thought to be Anton Corvinus's *Passio*, published in Wittenberg in 1537 and in Iceland (in Oddur Gottskálksson's translation) in 1559. Then there was *Passionall*, with text and introduction by Luther, and translation by Bishop Guðbrandur Þorláksson, published in 1598. Guðbrandur also translated

Nicolaus Selnecker's *Passio. Das Leiden und Sterben unsers Herrn Jesu Christi* [The suffering and death of our Lord Jesus Christ], first printed in Heinrichstadt (1572) and then in Hólar (1606). *Passionale* or *Sjö krossgöngur* [The Seven Stations of the Cross] is a set of sermons, translated by Arngrímur Jónsson, printed at Hólar (1618), and based on Martin Hammer's *Sieben Creutzgäng Jesu Christi*, first printed in Leipzig (1615). 1618 also saw the publication of *Krosskveðjur* [Cross greetings], Arngrímur's translation of a work by Bernard of Clairvaux. Oddur Einarsson's *Passio, sjö stuttar predikanir* [The Passion: seven short sermons] was printed at Hólar in 1620; neither the author's name nor the language of the original text is known (Halldór Hermannsson 1922, 86). Þorlákur Skúlason of Hólar's *Fimmtíu heilagar hugvekjur* [Fifty sacred meditations], a translation of a work by Johann Gerhard, was published in 1630, while *Passio Christi*, eight sermons by Johann Forster, translated by séra Jón Arason of Vatnsfjörður (1606–1673), was printed in 1678. Johann Arndt's sermons on Christ's Passion were published in 1683 in séra Hannes Björnsson's translation, and, last, there were Jón Vídalín's Wednesday sermons for fasts (six by Vídalín and the seventh by Bishop Steinn Jónsson); they appeared in a 1722 volume that, like many others, was printed at Hólar.

Thus in seventeenth-century Iceland plenty of printed books, especially translations, offered meditative treatments of Christ's suffering and death. Most of these works are translated directly from German, many soon after their initial publication. Pre-Reformation poems dealing with the same subject matter include séra Hallur Ögmundarson's *Gimsteinn* [Gemstone] and *Mariublóm* [Flower of Mary] and, attributed to Bishop Jón Arason (1484–1550), *Píslargrátur* [Passion tears] (see Vésteinn Ólason 1993, 305); while many post-Reformation Icelandic poets composed works about the Passion, among them Arngrímur Jónsson the Learned and Oddur Oddsson of Reynivellir (Jón Þorkelsson 1886b, 308). The hymns by three of Hallgrímur's contemporaries are worth examining in some detail: *Píslarsaltari* [Passion psalter] by séra Jón Magnússon of Laufás (1601–1675), *Passíusálmar* [Passion hymns] by séra Guðmundur Erlendsson of Fell (1595–1670), and Stefán Ólafsson's *Píslarsálmar* [Passion hymns].



### Séra Jón Magnússon's *Píslarsaltari*

The subheading of Jón Magnússon's *Píslarsaltari* reads *Sjö hymnar út af píslum Drottins vors Jesú Kristí, sorgfullum hjörtum til huggunar* [Seven hymns on the suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ, to comfort sorrowful hearts]. The hymns are included at the end of a 1655 volume of meditative hymns by séra Sigurður Jónsson. It is a work of great learning and in its *inventio* bears all the marks of the Passion hymn tradition.

It features a number of *topoi* that were typical of the genre, notably figural allegory: “Í anda ertu [Jesú] fyrir augum mér / sem Aaron með sitt glóðarker” [In spirit you [Jesus] appear before my eyes, / like Aaron with his censer] (5,3). The reference is to the Jewish Day of Atonement, when Aaron offered up a sacrifice (see Leviticus 16:12). Jesus is addressed as “Jósef bróðir minn” [Joseph, my brother] (3,1) and an explanation follows in the next verse: “Frá fári stóru frelstir mig / þá framseldu þínir bræður þig / undir framandi yfirvald [. . .]” [From great misfortune you saved me, / when your brothers passed you over / to the alien powers [. . .]]. In this way Jesus’ fate (handed over to the Romans) recalls that of the Old Testament Joseph, handed over by his Jewish brothers (albeit indirectly: see Genesis 37) to the authorities in Egypt, an act that also has a contemporary meaning (each time): “aftókstu þar mitt syndagjald” [you removed there my sin payment] (3,2). The reference is to the Flood and Noah’s ark (Genesis 7–8): “Í flóði synda förguðust þeir / sem fóru ekki inn um síðu dyr / á Nóa örk, svo nær þeim þín / sem nema ei skjól í síðu þín” [In a flood of sins they foundered / who found not their way through the side entrance / to Noah’s ark, and so suffering touches those / who find no shelter in your side] (6,16). There is also a reference to Jonah the prophet: “líkams musteris leiðstu tjón / lét Guð hvalfiskinn svelgja Jón” [body temple wounds you suffered, / God had a whale swallow Jonah] (7,15). All these Old Testament incidents prefigure events in the life of Christ. As for Adam’s breach of the Law in the Garden of Eden, scholarly tradition associated Eden with the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus atoned for Adam’s sin. However, Gethsemane is not mentioned in the *Píslarsaltari*, perhaps because listeners’ familiarity with the story made this unnecessary.

The hymns in Jón's *Píslarsaltari* take the form of the narrator's addresses to Jesus. A few verses deviate from this format (in moments of straightforward narration or when the soul is addressed), but overall the poem is an address to Christ and has no contextual scene setting. The narrative contours of the Passion story are followed as the narrator recalls the events: "Þá pontverskur við þér Pílatus tók / píslir það þínu hjarta jók" [When Pontius Pilate received you / the pain in your heart increased] (3,3), "Um villu og landráð var þér kennt / og að vildir kónglegt regiment" [With error and treason you were indicted / and that you wanted royal authority] (3,9).

All seven hymns are in the same meter. The first two serve as an introduction to the sequence and have no heading. The third discusses "það hvað Drottinn leið fyrir Pílató" [what the Lord suffered before Pilate], the fourth is about "útleiðslu Drottins í aftökustaðinn og hans harmkvælafula krossfesting" [the Lord's leave-taking at the execution site and his painful Crucifixion], the fifth about "sjö andlátsorð Kristí" [Christ's Seven Last Words], the sixth about "dauða vors Jesú Kristi" [the death of our Lord Jesus Christ] and the seventh "um greftran Jesú Kristí líkama" [on the burial of Jesus Christ's body]. Each hymn concludes with a prayer, though this is partially concealed by the poem's overall address mode, and prayers can also be found within the hymns.

There are constant references to the significance for mankind of every detail in the Passion story: "Þú þagðir að bæta mælgí mín / mína sál gleður hógværd þín / eg veit þín andsvör einarðleg / á efsta degi forsvara mig" [you remained silent to atone for my chattering / your gentleness salves my soul / I know your defiant answers / on the Last Day will defend me] (2,11). The narrator likens himself to a wayfarer: "Vegfarandi eg vesall er / af veikni efni sem leirsmíðs ker / dýrmæt er sál mín Drottins eign / hans dreyri hennar frjósamt regn" [I am a poor wayfarer, / weak in substance as a potter's pot; / my soul is an asset precious to the Lord; / his blood is its fertile rain] (3,8). Every line of the stanza introduces a new simile. The third hymn discusses the red cloak in which Jesus was taken and the event is given a typological meaning: "klæðleysi Adams olli því" [Adam's nakedness caused it] (3,16). The crown of thorns crushed Jesus' head in order that mankind may be crowned with mercy.

The *Píslarsaltari* is a legitimate offspring of the Passion poetry

tradition, though in many respects it is very different from Hallgrímur's *Passíusálmur*. For example, the two poets respond differently to Pilate's famous words "Sjáið manninn" [Ecce homo; Behold the man] (John 19:5). Hallgrímur explores the phrase in various ways, not least repetition, as when he states unexpectedly that the heavenly angels will later say of him "Sjáið nú þennan mann" [See now this man]. Jón's *Píslarsaltari* simply says:

Landsdómarinn þig leiddi út,  
lausnari minn, fullan af súr,  
segjandi manninn sjáið hér,  
svo segi eg við þá sem brigsla mér.

[The Roman governor led you out,  
my Redeemer, full of sorrow,  
saying, "see the man here;"  
so say I to those who reproach me.]

Another instance of differing responses is how the poets treat the moment in the Passion when Jesus is led to the judgment seat at Gabbatha. Hallgrímur explains the place-name: "Háa steinstræti þýðir það" [it means a stone highway] (27,4), while Jón Magnússon has this meaning in mind in the lines "Hrjúfur stóðstu á háfum flöt / hafa lát mig þess eilíf not" [You stood bruised on a stone highway / may I have eternal use of this] (3,22). The same image occurs in the following stanza by Hallgrímur, though he assigns an eternal meaning to the world's slippery highway:

Háa steinstrætið heimsins sleipt  
hefur mér oft í vanda steyp.  
Þangað lét Jesús leiða sig  
svo líknin hans kæmi yfir mig.  
(27,14)

[The world's slippery highway  
has often dropped me into difficulty.  
There Jesus let himself be led  
so his mercy might cover me.]

The relatively few classical figures of speech in Jón Magnússon's *Píslarsaltari* include Jesus being addressed periphrastically as “blessaði sálar biskup minn” [my soul's blessed bishop] (5,1) and “sætasti blóðbrúðgumi minn” [my sweetest blood-bridegroom] (6,26), while the devil is “morðengill í myrkradal” [a death angel in a dark valley] (1,4). The *Píslarsaltari* is a meditation, and readers are expected to project themselves into the text, as we see in the familiar image “vænn spegill er mér dæmið þitt” [a fine mirror for me is your example] (5,6); and Christians were supposed to read the Passion story in exactly the same way. Luther was among the writers to use this figure. One example is a composite image “Syndanna straumur yfir þig gekk / þá yfir um gekkstu Kedrons bekk / svo myrkvadýki og heljar hver / hefði ei vald að granda mér” [A stream of sins went over you, / when you went over the Kidron valley, / so that the dark ravine and hell's hot spring / had no power to harm me] (1,5). When Jesus crosses the Kidron stream in the region where the events of the Passion took place, the stream of sin flows over him in order to prevent the narrator/mankind sinking down into even more deadly waters. After a contextually appropriate image, “Drottinn, þín náð er djúpur sjór” [Lord, your grace is a deep sea] (5,8), the hymn ends with a prayer:<sup>15</sup>

Bið eg hvíli í brjósti mín  
 blessuð greftrunar minning þín,  
 hjarta mitt sé þín hvíldar gröf,  
 hönd og tunga þitt mikli lof.  
 (7, 22)

[I pray that in my breast may rest  
 the blessed memory of your burial;  
 may my heart be your tomb of rest,  
 may hand and tongue promote your praise.]

As we have noted, it was conventional to conclude a hymn with such sentiments. On the other hand the *Píslarsaltari* has little interest in “að sjá og skoða” [seeing and examining], though such

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15. In the third last verse (verse 22).

an approach would gradually become one of the main characteristics of Passion meditations.

### Guðmundur Erlendsson's *Historía Þínunnar*

The Passion hymns of Guðmundur Erlendsson were printed at the front of the volume containing Hallgrímur's *Passíusálmar* in 1666. As the title indicates they were divided into seven parts: *Historía þínunnar og dauðans Drottins vors Jesú Kristí: Eftir textans einfaldri hljóðan í sjö sálum yfirfarin* [The story of the Passion and the death of our Lord Jesus Christ: Retold in seven hymns according to the basic text]. Each part features a different meter and melody. The material is organized as follows: 1. The Last Supper and Gethsemane. 2. Judas's Betrayal, the Arrest, Peter's First Denial, Interrogation. 3. Interrogation by Caiaphas, Peter's Second Denial. 4. Interrogation by Pilate, Barabbas, the cries of the multitude. 5. Flogging, Judgment, Simon of Cyrene. 6. Crucifixion, natural disasters. 7. Events following Jesus' death and burial. The main part of each hymn retells the biblical story without commentary, but the final stanzas (one or more) are always addressed to Christ, together with brief comments:

Drottinn Jesú, sem dugir oss við dauðans fund  
fyrir það sára sútarbað  
sem þú hér vildir líða  
[. . .]  
(1, 11)

[Lord Jesus, who will support us when death comes  
because of the sore sorrow-bath  
that you were willing to suffer here  
[. . .]]

When treating the field purchased with Judas's pieces of silver Guðmundur notes that "Jeremía svo fyrirfram / fróður um þetta skrifa nam" [Jeremiah, in advance, / well-read, wrote about this] (3,20) but makes no more of the episode, unlike Hallgrímur, who devotes a whole psalm to it (see below for fuller discussion).

The vocabulary in Guðmundur's hymns is generally straightforward, yet Pilate is often referred to as a "jarl" [earl] (as at the beginning of the fourth hymn) and at one point the kenning "gætir dóma" [guardian of judgments] (4,19) is used about him. The final stanza of the fifth hymn features *anaphora*:

Kóngur Jesús í kvöl þú varst  
kóngur þegar þú hingað barst  
einn kóngur muntu koma,  
af þyrnikórónu þá þú skarst  
þrengdir þú mér til sóma.  
(5, 24)

[King Jesus in agony you were,  
a king when you appeared here,  
as a king you will come again;  
with crown of thorns when you were hurt,  
you were humbled to honor me.]

Here as elsewhere in the hymns the final stanza refers to the meaning of events for the narrator and all mankind: "þín heilög písl yfir heljarbál / í himnavist mig leiði" [may your blessed suffering over hell's fire / into a heavenly place lead me] (5,25). At the end of the sixth hymn the poet asks Christ to think of him when death approaches:

Fyrir þitt andlát og undir  
ó, Jesú, líkna mér  
helst um þær hryggvu stundir  
að höndum þá dauðinn fer.  
(6,21)

[Because of your death and wounds  
O, Jesus, care for me,  
especially in those dismal times  
when death is at hand.]

Guðmundur ends the hymn thus: "hvíl mig og svæf án sorga / sjá, þú ert búinn að borga / allt það mér yfirsást / amen" [grant me

rest and sleep without sorrow; / see, you have paid / for all that I overlooked / amen] (6, 22). This is the penultimate hymn and it naturally refers to sleep and death. The last verse of the final hymn expresses the hope that Jesus' suffering, death and burial may gladden "hryggvan þrælinn þinn" [your sorrowful servant], bringing comfort in death and eventually eternal peace.

### Stefán Ólafsson: Passion and Burial Hymns

Stefán Ólafsson's Passion hymns have never been printed in full.<sup>16</sup> There are seven of them, as with the Passion hymns of Jón Magnússon and Guðmundur Erlendsson, though their structure is somewhat different. They begin with an introductory verse in which all the events to be treated in the hymn are drawn together. The verse is in *dróttkvætt*, a meter not otherwise attested in Passion poems. It is printed here with full and half rhymes italicized:

Kóng vorn fjandmenn *fanga*  
 og færa Hannas til æru,  
 mági hans undir *augu*,  
*ettir* það biskup *settum*,  
 hann spyr, herrann svarar,  
 högg *beið* af þjón *leiðum*,  
 neitaði næst því Pétur  
 náð fann og bót ráða.  
 (Stefán Ólafsson II 1886, 310; Lbs 1177 4to, 4)

[Our King the enemies capture,  
 and bring to honor Annas;  
 an audience with his kinsman,  
 the then bishop, after that;  
 he asks, the Lord answers,  
 endured blows from a hateful servant,

16. Two stanzas from each hymn are printed as an appendix in Jón Þorkelsson's edition of Stefán's poetry; see Jón Þorkelsson 1886b, 309–314. The edition is based on "Hálfðanarbók," Lbs 1177 4to, pp. 1–16. The hymns are also discussed in Kristinn E. Andrésson 1928, 145, who identifies the manuscripts in which they can be found: Rask 68 4to (autograph manuscript; the *Passíusálmar* text ends after the fourth hymn), Lbs 1177 4to, Lbs 814 8vo, Lbs 496 8vo, Lbs 1725 8vo, Lbs 2194 8vo, and JS 235 8vo. The seven introductory verses also occur in JS 443 8vo, though the poet is not identified.

then Peter made denial,  
found mercy and relief.]

The hymns are mostly between ten and twenty stanzas in length, each accompanied by a different melody. Their main purpose is to retell the Bible story without commentary or typological comparisons. The narration is clear and without digressions. The final verse always takes the form of a prayer, usually accompanied by interpretation. Here, for example, is the final stanza of the first hymn:

Útganga þín, ó Jesú Krist  
og undaflóð písla þinna  
gefi oss hæga himnavist  
heims þegar nauðir linna,  
þinn blóðugur sveiti og banastríð  
bjargi oss mitt í dauðans tíð  
svo allt megum yfirvinna.  
(Lbs 1177 4to, p. 4)

[May your departure, O Christ Jesus,  
and the wound-flood of your Passion,  
yield us painless heavenly rest,  
when worldly trials retreat;  
may your bloody sweat and death-struggle  
save us in the midst of our demise,  
so we may everything overcome.]

Stefán's interpretation explains the meaning of each Passion element for believers studying the text. This can be seen in the tenth and final stanza of the fourth hymn, all of whose verses have thirteen lines:

Þú varst fanginn en fanga sleppt  
frelsari minn, því hefi ég hreppt  
sekur lausn frá synd, dauða  
og sviðanum vítis nauða,  
blóðugri krýndu þénar þig,



því er mín trú þú prýðir mig,  
 úrleystan öllum raunum,  
 æðstri dýrðar kórónu.  
 Dreyrrauð kápa réttlætis þíns  
 reiknist skýlan framferðis míns,  
 fyrst þú varst sleginn, frí komst eg  
 frá hnefum Satans, margvísleg  
 minnkun þín er mín æra.  
 (Lbs 1177 4to, p. 11)

[You were a prisoner, but a prisoner was released,  
 my Redeemer; therefore have I gained,  
 being guilty, relief from sin, death,  
 and hell's stinging torments.  
 Servants crowned you with bloody (crown);  
 in this lies my faith that you will favor me,  
 freed from all trials,  
 with glory's supreme crown.  
 The blood-red cloak of your righteousness,  
 may it shield me from my misconduct;  
 since you were struck, I found freedom  
 from Satan's fists, your manifold  
 humiliation is my honor.]

We have seen, then, that three of Hallgrímur Pétursson's contemporaries composed Passion hymns in which retelling the biblical story is the principal element, with interpretation often confined to the final verse. The hymns of Jón Magnússon of Laufás are distinguished by the way they address Jesus and their many references to Old Testament events that prefigure the events of the Passion, with such parallels certainly representing a form of authorial interpretation.

### *Passíusálmar*: Organization

The structure of Hallgrímur Pétursson's *Passíusálmar* is carefully managed, both overall and in terms of each individual hymn. The opening poem begins with an introduction or *exordium* that takes

up the first eight stanzas. The beginning is conventional, with its use of both *anaphora* and *epizeuxis*: “Upp, upp mín sál og allt mitt geð / upp mitt hjarta og rómur með” [Up, up, my soul and all my mind / up my heart and voice as well]. The Dutch scholar Ferdinand van Ingen has noted that many seventeenth-century hymns begin with the “auf, auf” [up, up] figure (van Ingen 1966, 209). Thus the Swedish poet Gideon Rålamb (died before 1693) opens his Passion hymn sequence as follows:

Wack up min Siäl och And; frisk upp mit Hiert’ och tunga  
Vp upp, du moste nu, om höga Saaker siunga [. . .]  
(Lindgärde 1996, 94)

[Wake up my soul and spirit, refresh my heart and tongue;  
Up up, you must now of mighty matters sing [. . .]]

Such wording occurs widely in Passion poetry because poets of the period compete with each other in following poetic convention and formulae, and Hallgrímur’s *Passíusálmar* are composed within this powerful Passion hymn tradition. Lindgärde points out that in the introductory sections expressions of authorial inadequacy for the task in hand are formulaic commonplaces.<sup>17</sup> In his introduction Hallgrímur says: “æ, hvað er lítil rækt í mér” [O, how lacking in devotion I am] and “of sjaldan hef ég minnst á það” [too seldom have I mentioned this]. Introductions sometimes claim that the poet has been urged by others to compose a poem. With Hallgrímur it was none other than Paul the Apostle who “skipar skyldu þá” [lays this duty [on all people]] to “kunngjöra þá kvöl og dapran deyð / sem Drottinn fyrir oss auma leið” [declare the Passion and sad death / that the Lord endured for wretched us] (see I Corinthians 11:26). Hallgrímur identifies a second motivation in the following verse: “Mig skyldi og lysta að minnast þess / mínum drottni til þakklætis” [I ought and wish to remember this, / in gratitude to my Lord God]. Hallgrímur’s *Passíusálmar* cannot be regarded as melancholy or tragic poems because the poet indicates in both the introduction and at the end of the sequence that meditating on

17. Often referred to as an “affected modesty *topos*” (Curtius 1953 [1948], 83).

Jesus' Passion is a joyous activity: "fögnuður er að hugsa um það" [a joy it is to think about this] (1,5). In his introduction Hallgrímur poses three rhetorical questions for an *interrogatio*:

Hvað stillir betur hjartans böll  
en heilög drottins pína og kvöl?  
Hvað heftir framar hneyksli og synd  
en heilög Jesú blóðug mynd?

Hvar fær þú glöggvar, sál mín, séð [. . .]

[What can better calm heart's sorrow  
than the blessed Lord's torment and suffering?  
What inhibits scandal and sin more  
than the blessed blooded image of Jesus?

Where can you see more clearly, my soul [. . .]

This sense of "seeing" is a key element in the *Passúsálmar*, where verbs of looking and examining are common, and indeed meditation itself involves opening up religious truths for the inner man and making the events of the Passion vividly present in his mind's eye. The introduction concludes with an *invocatio*, a call to Christ: "Ó Jesú, gef þinn anda mér" [O, Jesus, grant me your spirit], after which the *narratio* begins. But before examining this element we need first to explore the hymn's conclusion.

In classical times and then in the Middle Ages it had been conventional to conclude a poem with a reference to the onset of night and a period of sleep and rest, and this same motif occurs in Passion hymns (Lindgärde 1996, 101). It is thus fully in line with traditional rhetorical practice for Hallgrímur to conclude individual poems and also the overall hymn sequence by referring to sleep and death, as with "Lát mig einnig þá ævin þver / út af sofna á fótum þér, / svo kvíði ég síst við dauða" [Let me also when life fades / sleep at your feet / so that I dread not death at all] (37,14). The opening of verse 11 of the final hymn signals that the work is drawing to a close: "Hvíli ég nú síðast huga minn / herra Jesú, við legstað þinn" [Now, at the last, I rest my

heart, / Lord Jesus, at your tomb], but we also learn that the end of the meditation is joyful: “Þegar ég gæti að greftran þín / gleðst sála mín [. . .]” [When I think about your resting place, / my soul rejoices [. . .]] (50,11); “hjartað því nýjan fögnuð fær” [the heart fresh rapture receives] (50,12). The penultimate stanza confirms that the meditation is at an end: “Svo finni ég hæga hvíld í þér / hvíldu, Jesú, í brjósti mér / [. . .] hjartað mitt svo þar hvílist þú” [That I may find gentle rest in you; / rest, Jesus, in my breast, / [. . .] so that there in my heart you may rest] (50,17), while the final verse includes a radiant expression of praise: “Dýrð, vald, virðing og vegsemd hæst, / viska, makt, speki og lofgjörð stærst / sé þér, ó Jesú, [. . .]” [May glory, authority, reverence and highest honor, / wisdom, power, enlightenment and greatest praise / be unto you, O Jesus [. . .]] (50,18). This stanza is the unambiguous climax of the work. Another conventional element at the end of Passion poems is for the narrator to anticipate the song of praise that will be experienced in heaven’s eternal glory. Such eschatological perspectives serve as fundamental structural elements in sixteenth-century hymns, and are also characteristic of German Passion poetry (Lindgärde 1996, 102). In fact this element occurs not at the end of the *Passíusálmar* but in Hymn 25, with its reference to “upprisudaginn” [the Day of Resurrection], when the poet will receive the crown of glory and be led by holy angels into everlasting joy alongside them. This key spiritual moment represents an important structural climax.

The poems themselves are often presented to Christ as a gift, placed on his grave instead of flowers or a wreath. Hallgrímur compares his heart to an unearthed sarcophagus, thereby alluding to Christ’s grave. His faith is the linen cloth and his repentance the fragrant ointment, both of which are brought by the women to Jesus’ tomb on Easter Sunday morning. Similarly, as noted above, the German poet Andreas Gryphius declares in his introduction to his Passion hymns that he approaches the Redeemer’s tomb not with aloes and myrrh but rather with a simple linen cloth: “Hier bringe ich zu dem Grabe meines Erlösers nicht teure Aloen vnd Myrrhen / sondern nur schlechte Leinwand [. . .]” [Here I bring to the grave of my Redeemer no precious myrrh and aloes, but just a simple cloth [. . .]] (Gryphius 1964, 2:98).

### Fourfold Exegesis

Einar Sigurbjörnsson has shown (1994) that the fourfold method of textual exegesis has a lengthy tradition in Christian scholarship and is built into the structure of Hallgrímur's *Passíusálmar*, with each hymn interpretable in terms of the four elements identified in the work's overall title: "Historía þínunnar og dauðans Drottins vors Jesú Kristi með hennar sérlegustu lærdóms-, áminningar- og huggunargreinum" [The history of the Passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, with its special learned, admonitory, and consolatory elements]. Thus the biblical narrative is first rehearsed and the literal-historical meaning established; the allegorical meaning and moral teachings are then identified; finally, the anagogical meaning relating to eternal salvation lends an overall consolatory coloring to the text (Einar Sigurbjörnsson 1994, 120–121; see also Sigurður Árni Þórðarson 1990).

Ingeborg Huus (1996) has shown how the fourfold exegetical method can illuminate Hymn 48 in Hallgrímur's *Passíusálmar*. It can be used "not [. . .] as a traditional interpretative methodology but rather as a flexible paradigm for understanding how the different images function in the text. Deployed in this way, fourfold exegesis embraces the complex allegorical imagery and serves as the hymn's own rhetoric, a kind of pictorial rhetoric."<sup>18</sup>

As noted in chapter 3, both Sejersted (1995) and Storstein and Sørensen (1999) identified traditional exegesis as a key to understanding baroque texts. That Hallgrímur approached his material with this methodology in mind is made clear in the introduction that accompanied the manuscript he sent to Helga Árnadóttir and Kristín Jónsdóttir:

Yes, the Passion of Jesus Christ is a pleasure garden of souls. There may be found the most beautiful flowers of the sweetest examples that Jesus set in all his suffering; also to be found are the most pleasing flowers *of learning* and the most powerful flowers *of admonition* and

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18. ikkje [. . .] som ei tradisjonell tolkingslære, men snarare som eit bøyingsparadigme for å forstå dei ulike bileta sin funksjon i teksten. Quadriga nytta på denne måten femner det komplekse allegoriske biletspråket og fungerer slik som salmens eigen retorikk, ein slags bilekets retorikk (Huus 1996, 13).

the sweetest and most wholesome herbs of *consolation* that can heal all the soul's wounds much better than any medical herbs can heal the body's ailments.<sup>19</sup>

Hallgrímur's wording—the allegory that he develops—is characteristic of baroque period imagery. The title pages of meditative works often feature terms such as “spegill” [mirror], “aldingarður” [orchard], “reykelsi” [incense], “brunnur” [well], or “skóli” [school]. The same is true of Icelandic manuscripts of the period, some of which, especially hymnals, have titles such as *Lystiháfur* [orchard] (Lbs 2676 4to) (see Jón Samsonarson 1998), *Sálmareykelsi* [Hymns' incense] (ÍB 380 8vo), *Andlegt hljóðfæri* [A spiritual instrument] (Lbs 1568 8vo). Images of the church as a garden and of the Bible as a place where flowers (*flores*) grow were common, and flowers were used to pick out scriptural quotations in manuscripts (Stina Hansson 1991, 247).

### The Structure of Individual Hymns

All of Hallgrímur's Passion hymns have four elements: retelling of the biblical text, an allegorical or transferred meaning, admonition and consolation. Their deployment and the prominence given to each of these elements varies from poem to poem. While Hallgrímur is no slave to this structural model he uses it on each occasion in accordance with the nature and needs of the subject matter.

In Hymn 11, “Um afneitun Péturs” [On Peter's denial], the retelling of the story is unusually lengthy (seven of the seventeen verses: verses 1–2 and 4–8).<sup>20</sup> At the end of verse 2 the reader is told that “Lærdóm hér finna má” [A lesson may be found here] and the retelling is interrupted by verse 3, which features a prayer that goes straight to the heart of the subject: “Krossferli að fylgja þínum / fýsir mig, Jesú kær”

19. Já, þíningarhistorían Jesú Kristí er einn lystilegur sálma aldingarður. Þar má finna hin fegurstu blómstur þeirra sætustu eftirdæma sem Jesús gaf af sér í allri sinni kvöl, þar má og finna hin allra lystilegustu lærdómsblómstur og kröftugustu áminningarblómstur og hinar allra sætustu og heilnæmustu *huggunarjurtir* sem langtum betur græða meinsemdir allar á sálunni en nokkur læknisgrös kunna að græða líkamans kvilla (JS 342 4to, p. 84v; Hallgrímur Pétursson I 1887, 376–377, my italics; orthography modernized.)

20. It is possible to view verse 13 as part of the retelling but it is also prepares the way for the interpretation in verse 14.

[To follow the way of your Cross / I yearn, dear Jesus] (11,3). In this stanza (one of the most beautiful in all the hymns) the narrator compares himself indirectly with Peter; both try to follow the tortured master and both stand “álengdar fjær” [at a distance]. Hallgrímur would certainly have wanted to end his hymn with this verse, but placing it earlier in the poem ensures that the narrator/reader has already identified with Peter. The narrative resumes until the interpretation begins in verse 9 with an admonition that people should avoid arrogance (as Peter failed to do): “Þykistu stöðugt standa, / stilla þinn metnað þarft” [if you think you are standing steadfast, / you need to hold your pride in check], while the next verse points out that Peter allowed himself to be brought low by a wretched slave and finishes with a stern reminder that “Sama þig henda kann” [the same can happen to you]. The allegorical meaning of the text is not introduced until verses 11–12: “Koleldi kveiktum jafnast / kitlandi veraldar þrjál” [like a burning charcoal fire / is the world’s fancy-tickling tinsel].

The Passion scene, already presented in the retrospective narration, is now given a transferred and timeless meaning. It is the world itself (the fire) that beguiles, greets and then leads men astray, and thus those who sit by the fire are dangerous company for the innocent. Verses 13–14 unite allegory and admonition: after Peter had denied Christ he was unable to escape as he wished and then sinned again (“af sór sinn sæla herra / sér og formæla vann” [foreswore his blessed Lord / and cursed himself]). So it is in life that many end up in “ógæfugildru” [misfortune’s trap] (verse 14) where one thing leads to another and all is for the worse. In verse 15 the allegorical and moral meanings unite in a powerful comparison: “Oft má af máli þekkja / manninn hver helst hann er” [Often we may by a man’s speech tell / what sort of soul he is]. Just as Peter’s language (his vocabulary or accent) revealed his origins, so individuals’ vocabulary and idiolect indicate who they really are. The comparison between the narrator and Peter is repeated in verse 16: “Hryggileg hrösun henti / heilagan drottins þjón [. . .] Hvað mun ég máttarnaumur / mega þá standast við [. . .]?” [a grievous fall suffered / holy servant of the Lord [. . .] How in my weakness / may I resist [. . .]?). The final verse is a prayer restating the idea that the narrator is often in the same position as Peter. Though minimal the consolatory

element in this hymn can be found in the final prayer: “Láttu þitt ljós og anda / leiða og styrkja mig” [Let your light and spirit / lead and strengthen me]. Hallgrímur has also introduced the idea of consolation in a touching prayer in verse 3:

Þá trú og þol vill þrotna,  
þrengir að neyðin vönd,  
reis þú við reyrinn brotna  
og rétt mér þína hönd.

[When faith and endurance grow less,  
and a fierce crisis threatens,  
raise this broken reed  
and reach out your hand to me.]

For comparison we can take “Um leirpottarans akur” [On the potter’s field] (Hymn 17). Devoting only two of its twenty-seven verses to narration, the work explores allegorical meanings. There is very little admonition and the final seven stanzas are given over to consolation. The narrative substance is soon dealt with: with Judas’s thirty pieces of silver the Jewish high-priests purchased a potter’s field in which foreigners could be buried. But in this “finnst ein þýðing fín” [one elegant meaning can be found] (verse 3), and the poet explains it with reference to the Old Testament prophets Zechariah and Isaiah. By assigning an allegorical meaning to all parts of the text, Hallgrímur explains what atonement involves. Thus, the potter is God, his field is called mercy (and offers consolation), Jesus purchased the field to provide foreigners with a place of rest, each human being is a foreigner while alive, and through his death Jesus has purchased eternal rest in this field for everyone. Exhortation can be found in verses 18–20, in which the conditions accompanying this purchase are explained, notably that it applies only to those who have visited Jerusalem. In its transferred sense Jerusalem signifies “kristnin Guðs hér í heim” [God’s Christianity here on earth] (verse 19), and those belong to it who are baptized and then remain faithful and penitent every day (verse 20). Then compassion, praise and gratitude dominate the final seven verses: “Ókvíðinn er ég nú [. . .] Ég lofa, lausnarinn, þig [. . .] Ást þína



á ég ríka, / eigðu mitt hjartað líka [. . .] Í bindini barna þinna / blessun láttu mig finna” [I am not anxious now [. . .] I praise you, Redeemer, [. . .] I have your abundant love, / have here my heart also [. . .] In the body of your children / blessing let me find] (17, 21–27).

### *Passíusálmar: Motifs*

Many motifs in the *Passíusálmar* are familiar from other sources, while some are the poet’s own invention. Both feature in the discussion of Barrabas (“Um Barrabas frelsi” [On the freeing of Barrabas] (Hymn 29)). As already noted, *inventio* involves gathering evidence from a variety of sources from which the author can assemble persuasive arguments and proofs; these are governed by the nature of the subject and in turn they indicate the literary mode of the individual hymn. According to Quintilian these *topoi* divide into *loci a persona* and *loci a re*, that is, concerning people or things (Quintilianus II, 213). Thus one type of *loci a persona* motif is *nomen*, the meaning of a name:

Í myrkvastofu sá bundinn beið,  
Barrabas frá ég hann heiti.  
Má hér finnast ein merking greið  
um mannkyns neyð  
mjög skýr að öllu leyti.

Barrabas frá ég að “föður og nið”  
flestir lærðir menn þýði,  
Adam líkist þar eflaust við  
og allt hans lið  
sem á féll dauðans kvíði.  
(29,2–3)

[In a dungeon the bound one waited,  
Barrabas I hear he was called.  
Here can be found a simple sign  
of mankind’s suffering,  
so clear in every way.

I am told that Barrabas as “father” and “son”  
 most learned men translate;  
 Adam doubtless is like him,  
 and all his folk,  
 on whom dread of death has fallen.]

Hallgrímur refers here to a motif developed by other scholars rather than himself. The name Barrabas means “all mankind,” and conclusions are judiciously drawn from this that relate to all men: “Nú fyrst ég Adams niðji er, / nær mér gengur það dæmi” [Since I Adam’s descendant am, / close to me this example comes] (29,7). Here Hallgrímur presents his subject rhetorically as if defending a case. There is also an allegorical meaning (see Einar Sigurbjörnsson 1994), while the moral and ethical dimension derives from Hallgrímur associating himself with Barrabas, a part of sinful mankind. Barrabas is a rioter and the poet says: “Ó, hvað oft hef ég aumur gjört / uppreisn mótt drottins anda” [O, how often have I, wretched, / rebelled against the Lord’s spirit] (29,8). By a process of reasoning Hallgrímur eventually becomes Barrabas and sits as if he has been jailed for murder: “Mun ég ekki við manndráp frí, / mína sál þrátt ég deyddi” [I may not be free from manslaughter, / my soul I often slew] (29,9) and “fangelsið verst / fyrir því hlýtt ég að kanna” [the worst of prisons / for that I must experience] (29, 10). It was probably Hallgrímur himself who developed the motif in this way.

*Inventio* involves finding within the text “dæmi” [examples] for meditation and discussion (European Passion hymns often use the term “exempel” [prototype]; see Brask 1973, 2:196). In Hymn 30 Hallgrímur cites a “dæmi” about worldly ingratitude: “Upp á heimsins óþakklæti / er hér dæmi ljóst til sanns” [Of the world’s ingratitude / here is an example clear and true] (30,4). Hallgrímur often interprets specific scriptural elements in more than one way, as in this hymn with the “sollnar undir” [swollen wounds] of Christ. The first element is that those who sin against their own conscience can reopen Christ’s wounds; the second is worldly ingratitude; the third is the reference to Simon and his sons, which reminds us that the Lord’s blessing is passed on to descendants—Simon’s good deeds are a blessing for those coming after him. The fourth element is that

a “framandi maður” [a stranger] met Christ, with “framandi” here signifying all who are not Jews. Each element is treated in a single verse. Then the narrator takes over from the scholarly exegesis: “Synda undir ýfast mínar” [my sins’ wounds are sore] and now he carries wounds just like Christ. Examples also underline the moral interpretation, and Hallgrímur’s artistry lies not least in finding a new one for each verse. In verse 12, for example, the reading is based on the words “Komir þú undir krossinn stranga” [If you come under the cruel cross] (30,12); that is, if you find yourself in the same situation as Jesus, then “Láttu sem þú sjáir ganga / sjálfan Jesúm undan þér” [act as if you see walking / Jesus himself ahead of you], while the next verse finds a fresh perspective: “Undir krossi illvirkjanna / aldrei hér þig finna lát” [under the cross of evil-doers / never let yourself be caught] (30,13). In this way the narrative point of view changes and the reader is drawn into a variety of different situations. The final stanza features a prayer for the narrator’s children, expressing the hope that their names along with his own may be written in the Book of Life. It is no coincidence that the prayer appears at this point, for it relates directly to the blessing of the Lord reaching down to descendants, as discussed in verse 5.

### *Passíusálmar*: Verbalization

Unlike Hallgrímur’s other poetry, the *Passíusálmar* make no use of kennings or other features of Old Icelandic poetic language. This is not unnatural, as Icelandic poetic diction draws heavily on pagan mythology, though it is not unknown to find it used in moderation in religious poetry, as for example in *Biblíurímur* [Bible verses].<sup>21</sup> Moreover, the poetic style of the *Passíusálmar* is less complex than Hallgrímur’s other compositions, including his religious verse (discussed in chapter 13), in that there is no internal rhyme, including *aðalhending* [vowel and consonant rhyme] and *skeithending* [consonant rhyme]. Individual instances reveal the poet’s awareness of those rhyming possibilities, as for example

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21. The tension between native Icelandic poetic tradition and Christian verse has a lengthy history. Snorri Sturluson’s preface to his *Edda* provides the basis for solving the problem; see Cormack 2003, 46ff.

with “*gleymskusvefninn* [. . .] *Dimman heimselsku*” [the sleep of forgetfulness [. . .] darkness of worldly attraction] (4,11) but internal rhyme is never used. Thus the hymns can seem relatively straightforward at first sight, but closer inspection reveals the presence of many rhetorical figures.

Helgi Skúli Kjartansson has written about “stíl P[assíu]s[álmanna], einkum myndmál” [the style of the *Passíusálmar*, especially imagery] (1973, 15), drawing on the methodology of what was once known as the “new criticism.” Helgi points out that enumeration is an important stylistic feature in the *Passíusálmar*, more precisely “when a foot within a line is made up of two or more parallel words,”<sup>22</sup> and this feature involves strings of verbs, though noun lists are more common (Helgi Skúli Kjartansson 1973, 50–51). The rhetorical figure referred to is *accumulatio*. Helgi Skúli adds that though Hallgrímur seeks to attract attention and establish momentum at the start of the *Passíusálmar*, by the end he is at peace, while praise of God lasts for ever (Helgi Skúli Kjartansson 1973, 54). Helgi Skúli refers to various structural and stylistic features that are certainly present in the hymns, without associating them with formal rhetoric or assigning them their correct names; and indeed, identifying such links was not his intention. He notes that the hymns are full of taut contrasts, identified as a typically baroque characteristic, and he cites a Danish literary history and an article by a German scholar by way of support.<sup>23</sup> He adds that “various other features in the *Passíusálmar* recall baroque priorities in both literature and art; however, they are relatively free from many of the most transient [features] of the literature of the period.”<sup>24</sup> These potentially very suggestive points about the *Passíusálmar* and their interpretation are not developed further. The author cites two discussions from fifty years earlier, but fails to mention Friese’s *Nordische Barockdichtung*, published just five years before his own comments. This is a revealing insight into the absence of close links

22. Þegar setningarliður er fylltur með tveimur eða fleiri hliðstæðum orðum.

23. Carl S. Petersen, *Illustreret dansk litteraturhistorie* I, Kh. 1929, 937; Werner Weisbach, “Die Kunst des Barock,” *Propyläen-Kunstgeschichte* XI, Berlin 1924, 16.

24. Ýmislegt fleira í Ps. minnir á barökkstefnuna, bæði bókmenntir hennar og myndlist; þó eru þeir tiltölulega lausir við margt hið tímabundnasta í bókmenntum tímabilsins (Helgi Skúli Kjartansson 1973, 46).

at that time between Icelandic literary scholarship and European baroque research.

Stina Hansson suggests that the imagery of meditative writing obeys its own laws (Hansson 1991, 246), with subject matter and imagery inextricably linked. Lindgärde comes to a similar conclusion about Passion meditations, whereby *res* and *verba* are united in a distinctive way, so that “andaktslitteratur och konstilliteratur legitimerar och förstärker varandras ambitioner” [devotional literature and high literary art legitimize and reinforce each other’s aims] (Lindgärde 1996, 380). Ingeborg Huus (1996) makes a similar point when discussing Hallgrímur’s *Passíusálmar*, noting that seventeenth-century sensory imagery should be thought of in terms of classical rhetoric rather than European post-romantic aesthetics: “we can only communicate with the past when the actual images are viewed as a rhetorical strategy, deployed to inform and illustrate something essentially abstract and complex.”<sup>25</sup>

The next section examines more closely how Hallgrímur’s style and imagery are based on the traditions of classical rhetoric.

### *Passíusálmar*: Rhetorical Figures

As Óskar Halldórsson noted, Hallgrímur’s hymns feature a wide variety of images and figures of speech (1996, 60). The most important of these are:

*Accumulatio*. Clusters of nouns or verbs of similar meaning: “Gegnum hold, æðar, blóð og bein” [through [his] flesh, veins, blood, and bones] (3,2), “cymd, mæða, kvöl og fordæming” [misery, trouble, pain, and condemnation] (3,4); “Háðung, spottyrði, hróp og brigsli” [shame, derision, jeers, and reproach] (14,3); “sér, þekkir, veit og skynja kann” [sees, perceives, knows, and understands] (14,11); “Þú léna, gefur, lána þeim / löndin, ríki, metorð og seim” [you provide, give, loan, invest them with / lands, kingdoms, honor, and riches] (19,11).

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25. Først når ein ser dei konkrete bileta som eit *retorisk grep*, nytta for å opplyse og illustrere noko som i utgangspunktet er abstrakt og vanskeleg tilgjengeleg, oppnår vi ein kommunikasjon med fortida (Huus 1996, 23).

*Antonomasia*. Periphrastic phrases for the names of individuals. These are used in moderation: “brunnur miskunnarinnar” [the Wellspring of Mercy] (34,3); “Jesú, réttlætissólin sæt” [Jesus, sweet Sun of righteousness] (41,7).

*Apostrophe*. An address to some absent figure; used in nearly all the hymns. In Hymn 8 three individuals are addressed in quick succession: “Merkið það, valdstjórnendur. / Yður skal nú í eyra sagt” [Take note of this, you leaders. / Let it now be spoken in your ears] (8,18), “Minnstu [lesandi góður]” [remember [good reader]] (8,20) og “Drottinn Jesú, þú lífsins ljós” [Lord Jesus, Light of Life] (8,23). In Hymn 10, “Gæt að, mín sál” [Pay heed, my soul] (10,10) and “Þú Guðs kennimann” [you, God’s minister] (10,11). Sometimes the poet uses an apostrophe to turn from his real listeners to other specially chosen figures, to the surprise of his actual audience. Those addressed do not need to be present and may well be *factio audientis* [the imagined audience], other figures, or personified phenomena (Ueding 1976, 259), as when Hallgrímur addresses sin: “Ó, synd, ó, syndin arga, / hvað illt kemur af þér?” [O, sin; O, wretched sin; what evil comes from you?] (25,8).

*Anadiplosis*. The repetition of a word in any grammatical form at the beginning of the next line: “Í þínu nafni útvaldir / útvalinn kalla mig hjá sér” [in your name chosen / the chosen one they call me among themselves] (27,12) and “[. . .] aldrei mun koma að eyrum mín. / Eyrum blessuð því heyrðu þín [. . .]” [[. . .] never will reach my ears / because Your blessed ears heard [. . .]] (22,15).

*Anaphora*. The repetition of the same word at the beginning of successive lines: “*Hann* gefur hreina trú, / *hann* fallinn reisir, / *hann* veikan hressir nú, / *hann* bundinn leysir” [*He* bestows pure faith, / *he* raises the fallen one, / *he* restores the sick, *he* releases the one in bondage] (12,19). At the same time we find instances of *asyndeton*, non-coordinated parallel sentences, such as “*hann* fallinn reisir, / *hann* veikan hressir, / *hann* bundinn leysir” [*he* raises the fallen one, / *he* heals the sick one, / *he* frees the one in bondage]. Further examples of *anaphora* include: “Allt hef ég, Jesú, illa gjört / allt það að bæta þú kominn ert / um allt því ég kvittur er. / Allt mitt

líf skal þóknast þér [. . .]” [*Everything*, Jesus, I have done wrong, / *everything* to redress you have come, / of *everything* therefore am I now free. / *Everything* in my life will be pleasing to you] (19,21); “*Fullkomnað* lögmál fyrir þig er, / *fullkomnað* gjald til lausnar þér, / *fullkomnað* allt hvað fyrir var spáð, / *fullkomna* skaltu eignast náð” [*fulfilled* is the law on your behalf, / *fulfilled* is the payment for your redemption, / *fulfilled* all that was prophesied, / *the fulfillment* of grace shall be yours] (43,15); “*Svo að* lifa [. . .] / *svo að* deyja [. . .] / *svo að* greftrast [. . .]” [*So to* live [. . .] / *so to* die [. . .] / *so to* be buried] (49,22); “*Í dag* þitt hold [. . .]” [*Today* your flesh [. . .]] (40,13), “*Í dag*, hvern morgun [. . .]” [*Today*, each morning [. . .]] (40,14), “*Í dag* seg þú [. . .]” [*Today*, you say] (40,15), “*í dag* þá líður ei [. . .]” [*Today* it will not be long [. . .]] (40,17).

*Chiasmus*. The repetition of identical or similar sentence elements in reverse order. Hymn 14 has a good example, with the second half of a verse a mirror image of the first:

Ef hér á jörð er hæðni og háð,  
hróp og guðlastan “niður sáð,”  
uppskorið verður eilíft spé,  
agg og forsmán í helvíti. (14,16)

[If *here on earth* are sarcasm and irony,  
slander and blasphemy *sown*,  
*reaped* will be eternal ridicule,  
rioting and shame *in hell*.]

The phrase “hér á jörð” [here on earth] at the beginning of the verse contrasts with “helvíti” [hell]. The *accumulatio* of “hæðni” [sarcasm], “háð” [irony], “hróp” [slander], “guðlastan” [blasphemy] parallels “spé” [ridicule], “agg” [rioting], “forsmán” [shame], while, finally, the mirror image terms “niður sáð” [sown] / “uppskorið” [reaped] establish a key contrast in the middle of the verse.

*Antithesis*. A common contrastive figure: “*Sorgandi* gekkstú sagða leið [. . .]. *Hlæjandi* glæpa hljóp ég stig” [*Sorrowing* you walked the designated way [. . .]. *Laughing* I leapt down the path of crimes]

(1,20), “*illsku þjóðir* [. . .] englar *góðir*” [*evil* men [. . .] *good* angels] (9,9), “*lemja og hræða* [. . .] *friða og græða*” [*strike and frighten* [. . .] *calm and heal*] (12,17), “[. . .] *með ljóma birtu sinnar* / *í skugga maktar þinnar*” [*with its bright light* / *in the shadow of your power*] (8,19), “*Sárkalda* dauðans *sveitabað* [. . .] *sárheiti* dreyra *sveiti þinn*” [*sorely cold* sweat-bath of death [. . .] *Your sorely cold* bloody sweat] (3,11), “*Guðs míns ástarbirtu bjarta* [. . .]. *Hryggðarmyrkrið sorgar svarta*” [*my God’s love-bright brightness* [. . .]. *The grieving murk of black* sorrow] (48,14).

*Commoratio*. The frequent reiteration of an individual thematic point in different words. Examples of this common figure include: “*Pvo þú vor hjörtu og hendur með. / Hrein trú varðveiti rósamt geð. / Þitt blóð flekklaust sem flóði á kross, / frelsi það börnin vor og oss*” [*Wash* our heart and hands. / May *pure* faith preserve peaceful mind. / Your *undefiled* blood that streamed down on the Cross, / may it deliver our children and us] (28,10).

*Distributio*. The division of a whole concept into constituent elements: “*Fals undir fögru máli / fordildarhræsnin ber. / Vinátta tempruð táli / trúarlaus iðrun hér / edik gallblandað er* [. . .]” [*Falsity* under fair speech / flagrant hypocrisy. / Friendship tempered by trickery / faithless regret here / is vinegar blended with bile] (33,2).

*Epiphora / Epistrophe*. Repetition of the same word or words at the end of successive phrases, clauses or sentences. There are examples in Hymn 5, where the sentences “ég er hann” and “eg em hann” [I am he] appear at the opening of the hymn and are then repeated in the third line of the next four verses and, finally, in the first line of verse 10.

*Exclamatio*. Exclamations: “*Aví, hvað má ég, aumur þræll, angraður niður drúpa*” [*Alas, how must I, wretched slave, slump down in* sorrow] (41, 4); “*Aví, ég gaf þar efni til* [. . .]” [*Alas, I was the* occasion for it there [. . .]] (23,8); “*Ó, vei þeim sem með órétt lög*” [*O, woe to those who with unrighteous laws*] (27,7).

*Exempla*. Instances and examples: “*Abígail fær æru og sæmd, / illa Jessabel verður ræmd*” [*Abigail receives esteem and honor, / wicked*



Jezabel will be reviled] (22,12). “[. . .] gulltungan sú sem Akan stal” [[. . .] the gold ingot that Achan stole] (28,5). “Jónas sat undir einum lund” [Jonah sat in a certain grove] (37,13).

*Hyperbole.* Exaggerated expression: “Allar Jesú æðar stóðu / opnaðar í kvölinni. / Dreyralækir dundu og flóðu / um drottins líf og krossins tré” [All Jesus’ veins gaped / open in the agony. / Streams of blood poured and flowed / over the Lord’s body and the Cross’s wood] (48,9). “Báleldi heitum brenndu meir / broddar svíðandi í henni” [more than a blazing fire they burned / the searing barbs in it] (24,4). Many vivid expressions are used to describe Christ’s physical and spiritual suffering.

*Interrogatio.* Rhetorical questions: “Hvað mun ég máttarnaumur / mega þá standast við / vangætinn, vesæll og aumur / vélum og hrekkja snið?” [How shall I, bereft of strength, / be able to withstand, / weak, poor, and pitiable, / its [sin’s] plots and tricks?] (11,16); “Ég spyr hvað veldur, ódyggð flest / eykst nær daglega og fjölgar mest?” [I ask: why do most evils / increase almost daily and multiply?] (28,6); “Hvað kom þá til að herrann leið / harða þínu og beiskan deyð? Eða hvar fyrir hirtist hann, / hirtingar til sem aldrei vann?” [How did it happen that the Lord endured / harsh torment and bitter death? And why was he chastised, / who never deserved chastisement?] (45,4).

*Invocatio.* Invocations are common: “Ó, Jesú, gef þinn anda mér, / allt svo verði til dýrðar þér / uppteiknað, sungið, sagt og téð, / síðan þess aðrir njóti með” [O, Jesus, grant me your spirit, / may everything be to your glory / [that is] written, sung, spoken, and expressed [by me], / and then may others benefit from it] (1,8).

*Gradatio.* A sequence of related terms or units of utterance arranged for emphasis: “Hjartans innstu æðar mínar / elski, lofi, prísi þig, / en hjarta, blóð og benjar þínar / blessi, hressi, græði mig” [may my heart’s innermost veins / love, praise, and glorify you, / and may your heart, blood and wounds / bless, restore and heal me] (48,19); “Lögmál safnaði *sektum* mér, / *sektinni dauðinn* eftir fer, / *dauðinn* til dómsins dregur snar, / *dómurinn straffið* úrskurðar, / *straffið* um *eilífð* aldrei dvín, / *eilíf* því var hin þyngsta þín” [The law collected

my *crimes* / with *crimes* follows *death*, / *death* leads quickly to *judgement* / *judgement* dooms me to *punishment*, / *punishment* never abates in *eternity*, / therefore *eternal* is your heaviest torment] (45,8).

*Metaphor*. “Ambátt með yggldu bragði / er þessi veröld leið” [A serving woman with an unsavory look / is this loathsome world] (11,12); “Ótrú sinn eigin herra / ætíð um hálsinn sló” [Infidelity its own master / always strangled] (16,6); “Svipan lögmálsins lamdi / líf og sál heldur frekt” [the whip of the law lashed / body and soul very harshly] (23,5); “Visnað tré ég að vísu er [. . .] Gæskunnar eikin græn og fín / geymdu mig undir skugga þín [a withered tree I am for sure [. . .] O Oak of goodness, green and fair / guard me in your shade] (32,19)—here the narrator is the “withered tree” and Jesus is the “Oak of goodness;” “Miskunn sem heitir skálkaskjól / skyggnist eftir um fánýtt hól” [Mercy that is but a scoundrel shelter / seeks praise of little value] (28,6); “Tæpti ég mínum trúarstaf / á tréð sem drýpur hunang af. / Sjón hjartans öllu angri í / upplýsist nær ég smakka á því” [I touched with my staff of faith / the Tree that drips honey. / In all distress the heart’s eye / is enlightened when I taste of it] (32,21); “Samviskuorma sárin verst” [conscience-worms’ worst wounds] (40,5).

*Oxymoron* or *paradox*: “Öll þín læging er upphefð mín” [All your humiliation is my elevation] (24,11); “Högginn sem leiðstu hressa mig” [the strokes you suffered restore me] (24,11).

*Polyptoton*. The repetition of words sharing the same root, or of the same word in different forms: “Son Guðs ertu með sanni, *sonur* Guðs [. . .] *Son* Guðs [. . .] *sonararf* [. . .] *Syni* Guðs” [God’s *son* you are in truth, God’s *son* [. . .] *Son* of God [. . .] *Son*’s legacy [. . .] [to] the *Son* of God] (25,14); “Minnstu að *myrkra* maktin þver / þá *myrkur* dauðans skalt kanna / í ystu *myrkrum* [. . .] (8,20)” [Remember that the power of *darkness* fades / when death’s *darkness* you must face / in the outermost *darkness* [. . .]]; “Einn varstu, Jesús, [. . .] *einn* svo ég væri aldrei [. . .] Allir forlétu *einan* þig [. . .] aldrei mig / *einsamlan*” [*Alone* were you, Jesus, [. . .] *alone* so that I would never be [. . .] They all left you *alone* [. . .] never

[leave] me / *alone*] (9,5); “[. . .] það *kvöldið* eina. / Á *kvöldi* hverju [. . .] / *kvöldreikning* / með *kvöldoffurs*” [[...] that certain *evening*. / On every *evening* [. . .] / *evening* account / with *evening* sacrifice] (10,10); “Enn vil ég, sál mín, *upp* á ný / *upphaf* taka á máli því: / *Upp* stóð Jesús [. . .]” [again I wish, my soul, anew / to take *up* the matter: / *Up* stood Jesus] (3,1); “*þreföld* sök [. . .] *Prefaldleg* sekt [. . .] *Prefalda* styggð” [a *threefold* charge [. . .] *threefold* guilt [. . .] *threefold* hatred] (18,7); “*Góður* af geði hreinu / *góðorður* reynist víst. / Fullur af *illu* einu / *illyrðin* sparir síst” [A *good* man, pure of mind, / *good* in word will prove for sure. / The one full of only *evil* / *evil* words will least spare] (11,15). “Eilífur *dauði* *deyddur* er, / *dauðinn* *Jesú* það vinnur hér. / Dýrt metur drottinn *dauða* minn. / *Dauði*, hvar er nú broddur þinn? / *Dauðinn* til lífsins nú stutt er stig, / stórlega því *dauðinn* batar mig” [Eternal *death* is *dead*, / Jesus’ *death* brings this about here. / Precious values the Lord my *death*. / *Death*, where now is your spear? From *death* to life the step is short; / greatly therefore *death* benefits me] (45,11). The following verse plays on the verb “að dæma” [to judge]: “Drottinn *Jesú*, sem *dæmdur* varst, / *dómari* kemur þú aftur snart. / *Dómsmenn* láttu til dýrðar þér / *dómana* vanda rétt sem ber” [Lord Jesus, who was *judged*, / as a *judge* you will come again before long. / May *judges*, to your glory, / true *judgements* pass, as they should] (28,10).

*Similitudo*. Carrying over an element of likeness from one thing to another: “Koleldi kveiktum *jafnast* / kitlandi veraldarþrjál” [to a burning charcoal fire can be likened / the world’s fancy-tickling tinsel] (11,11); “[. . .] *sem* fugl við snúning snýst / *sem* snaran heldur” [[. . .] *like* a bird twists with the twisting / of the trap that holds it] (12,9); “Ill eftirdæmi á alla grein / eru *samlíkt* við mylnustein. / Viljir þú vera af fári frjáls / festu hann aldrei þér við háls” [Bad examples in all respects / *are like* a mill-stone. / If you wish to be free of misfortune / fasten it never around your neck] (22,11); “Sinn faðm *allt eins* og barnið blítt / breiddi mót föðurnum kæra” [*Just as* a blessed child its arms / reaches towards its beloved father] (34,2); “*Júdas* [. . .] *eins* og Akítófel” [Judas [. . .] *like* Achitophel] (16,6); “*Eins* og faðirinn aumkar sig / yfir sitt barnið sjúka, / *svo* vill Guð einnig annast þig [. . .]” [*Just as* the father watches tenderly / over his sick child, / so will God also look after you [. . .]] (44,6). And as for Jesus’ blood, it

is “*sem* regn það hraðast hrundi / himins í dimmuskúr” [*like* rain that deluges fast / from a darkened sky] (23,3).

*Synecdoche*. Replacing one word with another from the same semantic field that carries either a broader or narrower range of meaning: “Hjartans innstu æðar mínar” [my heart’s innermost veins] (48,19) refers to the narrator himself. In Hymn 41 we find “sólarbirta” [the sun’s brightness] instead of “jarðlífsins” [earthly life], while eternal life is “ljós” [light], so that the narrator is led from the sun’s brightness through the darkness of death and on into eternal light: “Þá sólarbirtunni ég sviptur er [. . .] Leið sál til ljóssins mína” [When of the sun’s brightness I am deprived [. . .] lead my soul to the light] (41,10). And Christ’s linen garment can represent Christ himself (the part for the whole): “Þeim klæðafaldi þreifa ég á / þegar mig hryggðin slær” [the garment hem I touch / when sorrow strikes me] (36,9).

### *Passíusálmar* as Verse Meditation

Though Hallgrímur Pétursson’s introduction to the *Passíusálmar* does not discuss the style of the hymns, he uses the terms “umþenking” twice and “íhugun” once, showing clearly that he regards the overall work as a meditation. Jón Jónsson of Melar also wrote an introduction to the work. He was Hallgrímur’s neighbor and (doubtless) friend, related to Hallgrímur’s wife Guðríður, son of Jón the Vestmannaeyjar martyr-poet, and, not least, he was a poet in his own right. Jón makes no mention of the substance of the work but describes in a poetic way the importance of meditating on Christ’s Passion.

Christian meditation involves individuals projecting themselves into scriptural events and allowing those events to become part of their own experience. Lindgärde notes that it is either the narrator who observes and reflects on everything that occurs, or it is the reader/listener who is drawn into the events and urged to reflect on what takes place. Thus, in the *Passíusálmar* we find “Við Jesú grefran ég fæ séð / Jósef og Nikódemum með” [At Jesus’ burial I can see / Joseph and Nicodemus also] (49,9) and “Þú munt ei mér þjáðum banna / það að skoða, Jesú minn” [you will not in

my suffering forbid me / from reflecting on it, my Jesus] (48,8). The reader is often urged to participate: “Skoðaðu hvernig skírinn [. . .]” [Consider how baptism [. . .]] (48,7); “Settu fyrir sjónir þér” [set before your eyes] (47,14); “Sjá þú [. . .]” [Look [. . .]] (3,17); “horfðu beint upp á hann” [look straight up at him] (47,16); “Sál mín, set slíkt fyrir sjónir þér / og sjáðu hér” [O, my soul, set this before your eyes, and behold here] (29,7).

These examples again support the idea that in terms of its overall form *Passíusálmar* is a meditation. The author or narrator often communicates with his own soul, and in doing so draws the reader/listener into that dialogue; in this way the distinction between narrator and reader is virtually eliminated (see Lindgärde 1996, 170).

Both meditation and preaching seek to bridge the gap between the present day and the time of the Passion, so that the events are not treated in comfortable historical isolation but as immediate living experience. In order to achieve this effect the rhetorical device of *evidentia* (dramatization of the scene and involvement of the audience as eye-witnesses) is used. In the *Passíusálmar* this is helped by the use of present tense verbs: “Pílatus kóng þig *kallar* hér. / Krossfesting Júðar *óska* þér” [Pilate *calls* you a king here. / Crucifixion the Jews *demand* for you] (27,8); “Allur almúginn upp á það / *andsvarar* greitt í þessum stað” [All the common people this / *answer* at once in this place] (28,2). Another related device is *exhortatio*: “*Komið svo*, konur og menn / að krossinum Jesú senn” [*Come*, women and men, to the cross of Jesus at once] (47,13). Immediacy is also achieved by references to those who *now* walk past Jesus’ cross: “Þá fram hjá Kristí krossi *nú* / kallsandi held ég ganga / sem ekki af hjartans ást og trú / elska hans þínu stranga” [some past Christ’s cross *even now* / walk in cruel mockery, I think / who do not with heartfelt feeling or faith / love your harsh suffering] (38,5). The narrator approaches the cross as an unknown traveler from afar, “Að þínum krossi, Kriste kær / kem ég sem einn framandi” [To your cross, beloved Christ, / I come alone as an alien] (38,6). He then decides to stand there quietly even though the cost may be high: “Þar stend ég kyrr þó kalls og spé / kveiki mér heims óblíða. / Upp á þig, Jesú, einn ég sé” [There I stand calm though jeers and ridicule / of the rough world provoke me.

/ I look up at you, alone, Jesus] (38,12). We sense the proximity of the narrator to the crucified Christ when he says: “Horfi ég á hendur þínar, / herra minn, Jesú kær” [I gaze on your hands, / my Lord, dear Jesus] (33,8). Debora Shuger says that at this point the main aim is not to convince but to unite (two worlds and two chronological periods) and to eliminate the distance between the reader and the events (cited in Lindgärde 1996, 164). We see this in the *Passíusálmar* when the narrator urges the reader/listener to take a seat next to the women who visit Jesus’ tomb, Mary, the mother of Jacob, Magdalena, and Salome: “Í þeirra selskap, sál mín blíð, / settu þig niður litla tíð” [in their fellowship, my blessed soul, / be seated for a short while] (49,8).

Jakob Jónsson (1972) and Einar Sigurbjörnsson (1994) have drawn attention to Hallgrímur’s use of *evidentia*; they do not use the specific term but explain the notion in terms of the mysticism with which it is certainly linked. Einar points out that the influence of such mysticism is extensive in Hallgrímur’s works, not least the *Passíusálmar*, in that in his meditation the poet is by no means a neutral spectator but rather a participant in the events (Einar Sigurbjörnsson 1994, 123). Discussing this effect, Jakob Jónsson explains how Hallgrímur visualizes the events of the Passion as if they were happening simultaneously in the past and present:

the characters that appear in the drama of the Passion story [. . .] become representatives of ordinary people, with (as always) their good and bad points, their vices and virtues. [. . .] The character descriptions apply to all periods. [. . .] We are they and they are we.<sup>26</sup>

Sometimes in the *Passíusálmar* Hallgrímur addresses the secular and spiritual authorities: “Merkið það, valdstjórnendur” [take note of this, you leaders] (8,18), “Yfirmönnunum er því vant” [the rulers need to be careful] (22,10), “gæti þess æðri stétt” [the upper class should take note of this] (26, 7). It has often been said that Hallgrímur is very direct when criticizing the authorities in Iceland,

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26. Þær persónur, sem koma fram í drama píslarsögunnar [. . .] verða fulltrúar fyrir fólkið, eins og það gengur og gerist, með kostum og göllum, syndum sínum og dyggðum. [. . .] Skapgerðarlýsingarnar eiga við alla tíma. [. . .] Vér erum þeir og þeir eru vér (Jakob Jónsson 1972, 40–41).

though he certainly also admonishes the common people. In her study of Passion poetry in Sweden Lindgärde notes the emphasis on Jesus' humility, contrasting it with human pride and cruelty, and also on his criticism of representatives of the secular and spiritual authorities, albeit not always expressed directly. As Lindgärde remarks, the Passion invites interpretation in terms of the abuses of power, arrogance, and hypocrisy, even among those in positions of responsibility. It is thus surprising, she argues, that some texts advise people to accept the established social order, identifying two hymns as examples of this. Lindgärde considers that Passion poems generally reflect the widespread European belief that meditation was for everyone, both learned and lay, whereas neo-Latin verse, for example, was intended only for the educated classes.

In his discussion of Bellman's spiritual poetry, Sven Thorén has pointed out how the narrator often takes on the role of theatrical director, encouraging or restraining his actors. Lindgärde identifies a similar dramatic element in Passion poetry, as when, for example, Judas is addressed and allowed to speak for himself. Hallgrímur's *Passíusálmar* often feature lifelike settings, though the narrator does not go so far as to address any characters other than Christ. One example can be found in Hymn 11 that tells of Peter's denial. Here the discourse frequently switches into direct speech: "Mun þessi mann, hún frétti, / með Jesú af Nasaret? [Is this man, she asked, / with Jesus of Nazareth?] (11,4). The presentation is also quite dramatic when the narrator converses with the heavenly angels: "Svo munu Guðs englar segja: / Sjáið nú þennan mann!" [Then God's angels will say: Behold this man!] (25,12) and "Þá muntu, sál mín, svara [. . .]" [Then, my soul, you will answer [. . .]] (25,13).

Natural description in Passion poetry often takes the form of a particular location being identified as a *locus terribilis* (Gethsemane, Golgotha) or *locus amoenus* (the Garden of Eden) (see Garber 1974). For instance, Gethsemane must lie behind Hallgrímur's terse description of the anguish of Jesus: "Jörðin var honum óhæg eins" [the earth was for him also full of hardship] (3,3). Similarly the environment of the person with whom God is angry can prove hostile: "hvorki verður til huggunar / himinn, jörð, ljós né skepnurnar" [nor will there be consolation / from heaven, earth, light nor created being] (3,4). The poet notes the similarity between this place and

another that is worse: “fordæmdra kvöl í helvíti” [the torment of the damned *in hell*] (3,5).

Passion poetry’s traditional interpretation of the solar eclipse and earthquake accompanying Jesus’ death was that it symbolized the empathy of the natural world; there was also regret that mankind did not react similarly and people are encouraged to express their sorrow and shame. In Hallgrímur’s hymns we find “Sólin blygðast að skína skær / þá skapara sinn sá líða [. . .] Ó, hvað skyldi þá skammast sín / skepnan sem drottni jók þá þín” [the sun was ashamed to shine brightly / when its Creator it saw suffer [. . .] O, how mortified with himself / that man should be who added to the Lord’s pain] (41,3); “Jörðin sjálf þegar Jesús dó, / jafnvel þeir hörðu klettur þó / sýndu meðaumkun sæta” [the earth itself, when Jesus died, / even the hard rocks / showed sweet compassion] (46,3); and “Steini harðara er hjartað það / sem heyrir um Jesú þínu, / gefur sig þó þar ekki að” [Harder than stone is the heart / that hears of Jesus’ suffering, / but pays no heed to it] (46,4). This is an example of *exsuscitatio*, a figure designed to arouse empathy among those listening (Lausberg 1967 [1949], 418).

In Swedish Passion poetry the act of crying is an important way of signalling strong emotion. The narrator weeps frequently and so do the characters in the Passion. Lachrymose descriptions of this kind are common in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century meditative works, not to mention other literary genres, including French novels, diaries and even legal documents (Lindgärde 1996, 211). Crying is often depicted by means of *hyperbole*: “táraflóð” [flood of tears], “tárabrunnar” [wells of tears], while an individual may bathe in tears or even drown in them. Hallgrímur’s style is often intensely emotional, as when Jesus’ agony in Gethsemane begins: “Hjartanlega varð harmþrunginn / herrann Jesús í þetta sinn. / Holdið skalf við það feikna fár, / flutu í vatni augun klár. / Sagði grátandi: [. . .]” [Deeply was he distressed, / the Lord Jesus on that occasion. / The flesh shook with the fearsome pain, / flooded with tears the bright eyes. / He said, weeping: [. . .]] (2,11). There are, however, relatively few instances of the narrator himself weeping.<sup>27</sup>

27. Though see, for example, “Oft lít ég upp til þín / augum grátandi” [Often I look up to you / with tearful eyes] (12,29).



Lindgärde points out that crying can be less prominent when the poem is primarily a work of praise, and this may help to explain why the *Passíusálmar* narrator rarely depicts himself in this condition. At the end of Hymn 42, which treats Jesus' expression "Mig þyrstir" [I thirst], thirst is explored from a variety of perspectives. The poet declares: "Ekki er hjá mér l það þyrstum þér / þori ég nú fram að bjóða / nema fá tár [. . .]" [I have nothing for your thirst / that I dare now offer you / except a few tears [. . .]] (42,15). Crying is, of course, linked to repentance: "syrgjandi ég það fyrir þér græt. / Harmaraust heyr þú mína" [in sorrow I weep for you. / Hear my woeful voice] (41,7).

The notion that the narrator himself, the one meditating, is responsible for Christ's suffering is much in evidence: "orsök ég til og efni gaf / allrar hörmungar þinnar" [I am the reason and gave cause / for all your sufferings] (31,13), and he therefore deserves his place among those who tortured Christ: "Ég má vel reikna auman mig / einn í flokk þeirra manna / sem í kvölinni þjáðu þig" [I may well count myself as wretched, / one of the troop of men / who in torment tortured you] (34,9). But in the following verse his lot has changed for the better: "því ég er Guðs barn og bróðir þinn" [for I am God's child and your brother] (34,10), and in this same hymn Jesus is likened to a child who reaches out for his father.

Hallgrímur often organizes his material so that a single verse contains just one idea or image, as in the following example that draws on Isaiah 42:3 ("A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out"):

Rjúkandi trúarhörinn hér  
 helgur andi svo viðnærir,  
 ljómandi þar af ljósið skín,  
 lífgar hann allt með krafti sín.  
 (49,11)

[The smoldering wick of faith here  
 the holy spirit so nurtures,  
 that gleaming light shines from it;  
 he gives life to everything by his power.]

The present participle verbs at the opening of the first and third lines create a clear parallel and even a *gradatio*, as “rjúkandi” [smoldering] becomes “ljómandi” [gleaming] and “viðnærir” [nurtures] changes to “lífgar” [gives life]. As we have noted, the *Passíusálmar* are “áhorf” [observations] in which the narrator contemplates the final days of Jesus, while at the same time the narrator/the soul longs to set eyes on the Savior: “Ó, Jesú, að mér snú / ásjónu þinni. / Sjá þú mig [. . .]” [O, Jesus, turn towards me / your face. / See me [. . .]] (12,27); “Oft lít ég upp til þín [. . .] Líttu því ljúft til mín” [Often I look up to you [. . .] Look therefore mercifully on me] (12,29). The sight of Jesus means mercy and consolation: “Ég lít beint á þig, Jesú minn / jafnan þá hryggðin særir” [I look straight at you, my Jesus, / whenever sorrow hurts] (37,10); “Jesús einnig með ást og náð / aftur til þeirra lítur” [Jesus also with love and grace / looks back at them] (37,9).

### Conclusion

The European Passion poets discussed in this chapter were all writing during the baroque period, and much of their work is characteristic of baroque literature. They approach their material in a variety of ways. Gryphius uses an essentially uncomplicated style, and to that extent his Passion poetry differs markedly from his more baroque-inflected work. On the other hand, as Passion poets, Kingo and Naur in Denmark represent the high baroque. We have noted that Hallgrímur Pétursson’s Passion hymns differ considerably from those of his Icelandic contemporaries, especially in the greater attention paid to diversity of presentation, structural clarity and stylistic decorum, even though the style itself can initially seem rather plain. Each of Hallgrímur’s Passion hymns is based on traditional exegetical principles, and this interpretative model is a key element in understanding baroque texts and their intellectual background. Hallgrímur’s *Passíusálmar* are the legitimate and recognizable offspring of the baroque period, in which baroque literary characteristics are more prominent than in other seventeenth-century Icelandic Passion hymns.

The opening of this chapter discussed Krummacher’s theory that in German Passion poetry the narrative element becomes less

important as meditation and interpretation are given more space. Those poems were marked by a highly wrought, elaborate style and emotive presentation as emphasis shifted from Jesus' suffering to mankind's role in that suffering. These changes happened in German literature after the middle of the seventeenth century and influenced the development of baroque style significantly. A more pronounced interest in poetic language emerged, with innovations in sound, rhyme, and rhythm evident in religious writing. Hallgrímur's *Passíusálmur* clearly reflect such developments, unlike the Passion poems of Jón Magnússon of Laufás, Guðmundur Erlendsson of Fell, and Stefán Ólafsson, where the main emphasis is on the scriptural narrative itself, with limited verbal ornamentation or meditative interpretation. Meditation, interpretation, motifs, typology, scene setting, and experience are very important for Hallgrímur. Arne Møller has suggested that Jón Magnússon's *Píslarsaltari* inspired Hallgrímur to write about the Passion in verse, and this may well have been the case (Møller 1922, 171). Hallgrímur certainly succeeded in what he set out to do. However, it was not enough for him to have read Jón's *Píslarsaltari* or Møller's *Soliloquia de passione Jesu Christi*; he also knew how to apply the rules of classical rhetoric to his great theme so that his hymns would touch and gladden the hearts of all who read or heard them. Hallgrímur must have known European literary meditations on the Passion and death of Christ and also theoretical works that helped him to develop a secure understanding of the fundamentals of rhetoric. As for where he could have come into contact with European Passion poetry, it may be that Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson during his European travels encountered such works that had been composed under the new meditative and rhetorical influences. That innovative spirit can probably be traced to the increased influence of Catholic tradition among Lutherans, and the same quality might well have appealed to Brynjólfur.

Hallgrímur makes use of many rhetorical techniques in his verse, and his success lies to a considerable extent in achieving a deft balance between *ornatus* and *perspicuitas*, beauty of language and clarity of presentation. He finds a way of deploying the resources of rhetoric without confusing the reader or obfuscating his subject matter and meaning. It is no coincidence that Árni Magnússon

(1663–1730), the celebrated manuscript scholar and a learned and open-minded soul, went so far as to claim in a 1705 letter that Hallgrímur's *Passíusálmar* were “fremur flestum eða öllum söngljóðum í Evrópu nyrðra parti” [better than most if not all poems intended for singing in northern Europe] (*Arne Magnussons private brevveksling* 1920, 592). Over the years Árne has not been alone in claiming that the *Passíusálmar* represent not just a major Icelandic literary achievement, but stand comparison with the finest verse written anywhere in Europe.